

See THE *Quarter*
M E M O I R S

O F

NINON DE L'ENCLOS,

With her LETTERS TO

MONS^R. DE ST. EVREMOND,

AND TO THE

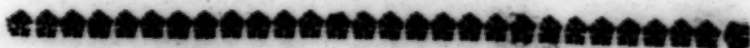
MARQUIS DE SEVIGNE.

Collected and translated from the FRENCH,

BY A L A D Y.

Donec erunt ignes, arcosque cupidinis arma,
Discentur numeri, culte Tibulle, tui.

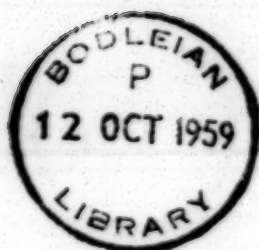
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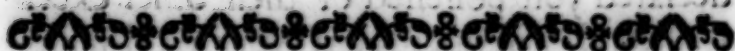


D U B L I N :

Printed for J. EXSHAW, H. SAUNDERS, and
J. POTTS, Booksellers.

MDCCLXII.





To her GRACE

The Dutchess of Bedford.

May it please your Grace,

I AM aware of the surprize you must be in, at seeing a work address'd to you, without your consent; without your knowledge, or perhaps your having ever heard of the book which I here present you with.

All writers purpose doing honour to their works by dedicating them to some great personage; no one can have this motive more in view than I, when I take the liberty of address'ing this volume to your Grace. But though I am certain that your patronage, like the stamp on coin, will at once both render it current, and cover its allay, I frankly confess that I am actuated by some other inducements; the first and strongest of which is, the pride and pleasure I am sensible of, in proclaiming the sincere gratitude and high respect I owe to the Dutchess of Bedford.

I present you, Madam, with the produce of my leisure, as the antients were wont to bequeath their unportioned orphans to the noblest and most generous of their patrons; and as your Grace's character has already

V DEDICATION.

declared you possessed of their other excellencies, I will not doubt your kind adoption of this little foundling, sent into the world without a *name*, or any merit but what it may be intitled to from *Yours*.

Another reason for stealing this address upon you was, that if I had been prevented from presenting this book to your Grace, I should have lost the advantage of the justification which I promise myself, upon publishing this work; as the world may be well assured I do not imagine there is any thing in these writings that can offend the most reserved ear, when I venture to present them first, to a person whose character and station so justly intitle her to the highest and nicest respect.

As I tremble at the apprehension of appearing in print without a mask, I shall not subscribe my name to this address, and am very certain that I may still remain concealed amidst a crowd, tho' I confess myself to be one of those, to whom your Grace's generosity and benevolence have given just reason for declaring themselves, as I have the honour of doing at present,

May it please Your GRACE,

Your GRACE's much obliged,
most grateful, most humble
and obedient Servant,

The TRANSLATOR.



Character of this WORK,

By an IMPARTIAL HAND.

THE subject is engaging, the memoirs more entertaining than a novel, and at the same time, authentic; the wit high, reflections new, singular and ingenious; the style pure, the language rich, and the translation so spirited, that upon comparing it with the original, the French appears to be only an indifferent version of the English.

This book bids the fairest of any ever yet published, for an universal sale.—It must take in all classes; men and women; men of pleasure, and men of letters; coquettes and prudes; young and old.

The nice reserve and chaste conduct with which the dangerous subjects of love and galantry, are so admirably guarded, do infinite honour to the delicacy and morals of the fair translator; and gave very just occasion to the following lines addressed to her by a gentleman.

To Mrs. • • • • •

Upon reading this Work.

WHILST Ninon's spirit kindles all love's fire,
Thy moral chastens every loose desire.
Thy regulated passion, void of blame,
Warms without scorching, like the vestal flame.
I trembled for you as I read along,
But found your reason cool, your virtue strong :
With such address the dangerous theme you treat,
As must the libertine's free hopes defeat :
Thy wit th' asbestos' property obtains,
Which from the hottest fire a pureness gains.
Like Emma's too, thy chastity appears,
Who rang'd unhurt, amidst the burning *sbares*.



T H E INTRODUCTION.

IN a weekly paper, lately published, stiled *THE WORLD*, (Numb. 28.) I met with the following extraordinary passage. Speaking of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, he says, " It was in her fifty-sixth year, that the Chevalier de Villiers, a natural son whom she had by the Count de Greze, arrived at Paris, from the provinces; where he had been educated without any knowledge of his real parents. He saw his mother.—He fell in love with her. The increase, the vehemence of his passion, gave the greatest disquiet to the affectionate matron. At last, when nothing but a discovery of the secret could put a stop to the impetuosity of his attempts, she carried him
" into

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“ into her bed-chamber, and pointing to a
“ clock, cried, *Rash youth, look there! at*
“ *that hour, two and twenty years ago, I*
“ *was delivered of you in this very bed!*
“ It is a certain fact, that the unfortunate,
“ abashed young man flew into the gar-
“ den, and fell upon his sword.

“ This catastrophe had like to have de-
“ prived the age of the most accomplish-
“ ed mistress that ever adorned the Cy-
“ therean annals. It was above twenty
“ years before the afflicted mother would
“ listen to any addresses of a tender na-
“ ture. At length, the polite Abbé de
“ Gedomie pressed and obtained an assign-
“ nation. He came, and found the in-
“ chanting Ninon reclining on a couch,
“ like the *Grandmother* of the *Loves*, in
“ the most galant deshabille. He asked
“ her, but with the greatest air of re-
“ spect, why she had so long deferred the
“ completion of his happiness? I must
“ confess, replied she, it proceeded from
“ a remain of vanity: I piqued myself
“ upon having a lover at fourscore, and
“ it was but yesterday that I was eighty
“ compleat.”

This extract naturally raised my cu-
riosity to inquire a little farther after so
extraordinary a woman; and I found out
that she had lived in the reign of Lewis the
four-

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fourteenth, and held a correspondence with Monsieur de Saint Evremond, during his exile in England. Some of her letters are among his works, and others I have met with elsewhere; both of which I here present the reader with, and shall add St. Evremond's letters in this correspondence, as they may serve to illustrate hers, and will prove an additional entertainment to the public.

But first, I must premise a hint, that if any one should take the trouble of comparing these pages with the original ones, they may perhaps, discover a method of translating, quite new; about which I beg to have the opinion of the *Literati*. Chance or necessity have sometimes produced good things; among which, very possibly, this may happen to be one; that not being perfect *mistress* of the French idiom, I was obliged to read the letters frequently over, in order to catch the spirit of the writers; which I have endeavoured to convey to the readers, in such a free manner as one tells a story or repeats a conversation; by imitating the humour, or expressing the sentiment, though not in the same literal way they received it.

Need I make any apology for leaving out passages, that I did not think would enter-

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entertain; or for bringing two sentences together, which were separate in the original, when I imagined they might reflect mutual light on each other, by being joined in the same paragraph?

LETTERS





LETTERS

BETWEEN

Ninon and St. Evremond.



NINON.

MONSIEUR de Charleval is just
 M dead; at which I am so much afflicted,
 ed, that I endeavour to console myself by considering the part you will
 take in my grief. I visited him every day: his
 mind had all the charms of youth, and his heart
 every tenderness and goodness that could be re-
 quisite in a sincere friend.

He often spoke of you, and of all the original
 wits of our time. His life, and that I lead at
 present, had a great deal of resemblance. In
 fine, such a loss is worse than death itself.

Pray let me hear from you. I am as much
 concerned about your welfare at London, as if
 B you

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you were still at Paris. Old friends have charms, which are never so well known, as when we are deprived of them.

Adieu,

N I N O N.

I WAS alone in my apartment, and quite tired with reading, when a servant came and told me there was a gentleman below, who came from Monsieur de St. Evremond. You may conclude that all my weariness was immediately shaken off; I had the pleasure of talking of you, and was thereby informed of little particulars, that letters cannot so well acquaint us with. He gave me an account of your perfect health, and the manner of your spending your time. The liveliness of your wit shews the effect of both; and your letters flatter me that England has forty years more of life in store for you. I think it is there only, that they speak of people who have outlived the age of man. I could have wished to pass the remainder of my life with you; and had you thought as I do, you would have been in this country 'ere now *. However, it is very agreeable to recollect those persons we have loved; and perhaps this separation of our persons has been made to embellish my epitaph †.

I wish

* He had been banished from France on account of an humorous satire he had written against Cardinal Mazarin. After the death of the Cardinal he had leave to return, but declined it.

† She means that the duration and constancy of her friendship for St. Evremond, might be numbered among the merits of her elegy. He says as much himself, in the last paragraph of the second letter following.

NINON AND ST. EVERMOND. 3

I wish your young divine had found me in *the glory of Niquée* *, where people never suffer any change; for I believe you think me one of the persons enchanted in it. Do not alter your opinion in this matter, which has been always favourable to me, and let this kind of intercourse, that some philosophers think better than presence, continue to our live's end.

I told the Abbé Turetin, that I should be pleased to do him any manner of service. He has already become acquainted with some of my friends here, who have found him worthy of the character you have given him. If he has a mind to converse with the honest abbots, who remain here in the absence of the court, he shall be received as a man whom you esteem. I read your letter before him with spectacles on; but they do not ill become me, for I had always a grave mien. If he is enamoured of that sort of merit, that is here stiled *distinguished*, perhaps your wish may be accomplished; for they endeavour to comfort me every day, for my losses, by this flattering expression!

You wish la Fontaine in England. We have but little of his company at Paris. His understanding is much impaired. This is the fate of poets. Lucretius and Tasso were examples of it. I believe, however, that there has not been any philtres given to him, for he had not much commerce with women who could afford the expence of them.

Adieu.

* See Amadis de Gaul.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

MONSIEUR Turetin is extremely obliged to me for introducing him to your acquaintance; and I am also obliged to him for giving occasion to the agreeable letter I have just received from you.

I do not doubt but he found you with the same eyes that I formerly so much admired in you; those eyes by which I could always perceive the conquests of a new lover, when they used to sparkle more than usual.

You are still the same to me; and though time, that ravager of all things, should have exerted its utmost effort to demolish your beauty, my imagination will always supply the *glory of Niquée* to you. I am very sure that with regard to your eyes and teeth, you have no occasion for it. What you stand most in need of in my judgment, is to comprehend thoroughly the advantages of your sense and apprehension, which seem to improve every day. In short, you have at present more wit and vivacity, than even the young and sprightly Ninon ever had.

Adieu.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

I HAVE received your second letter: it is obliging, agreeable, and full of wit. I perceive in it at once, the humour of Ninon, and the good sense of Madame de L'Enclos. I knew how the former lived, and I learn from you after what manner the other passes her time.

Every

Every thing contributes to make me regret the happy days I have enjoyed in your company, and to desire, in vain, to behold you once more! I have not strength enough to transport myself over to France, and you have attachments there, which will prevent you from coming to England. The Dutches of Bouillon can inform you that England has its charms; and I should be ungrateful myself, if I did not acknowledge that I had met with satisfactions and pleasures in it.

I am glad to hear that the Count de Grammont has recovered his former health, and acquired a new devotion. Hitherto I have been contented with being a good sort of a plain, honest man; but I must do something more now, and only wait for your example to become godly. You live in a country where people have extraordinary advantages towards saving their souls. There, vice is almost as much against the fashion, as against virtue: sinning passes for ill-breeding; shocks decency, and offends good manners, as much as religion. Formerly, it sufficed to be wicked. But at present, one must be a scoundrel, to be damned in France. They who have not regard enough for another life, are led to salvation by the considerations and duties of this *.

B 3

But

* The *Æra* here pointed out, was the meridian of Madame de Maintenon's power: who by her single virtue, through her influence over Lewis the Fourteenth, reclaimed a debauched monarch, and a licentious court. This passage in St. Evremond, is a most admirable description of that happy state of morals and manners to which the powerful example of crowned heads may reform a nation! I shall not dispute in *Politics*, the preference of monarchy over

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But enough, upon a subject in which the conversion of the Count de Grammont has engaged me. I believe it to be sincere and honest. It well becomes a man who is no longer young, to forget that he ever had been so. This is, however, what I could never yet arrive at. On the contrary, from the remembrance of my younger years, and recollection of past vivacity, I endeavour to animate and rouse up the sluggishness of age.

What I find most to be regretted at this period, is, that hope is fled! Hope, the sweetest passion of the soul, and which so kindly supplies the absence of every other enjoyment of life! What renders me most uneasy at present, is, my despairing ever to see you again. I must compound then, for the pleasure of writing to you sometimes, in order to keep up a friendship that has yet withstood length of time, distance of place, and the usual coldness of old age. This last expression alludes to myself only; for nature will begin with you, to shew that it is possible not to grow old.

Adieu.

N I N O N.

I LEARN with pleasure that my soul is dearer to you than my body; and that your good sense leads you always to what is best. In truth, the latter deserves no farther regard; but,

over other forms of government; but *in Virtue*, its advantages are as much superior, as example is to precept. Or, higher still, as the gospel to philosophy. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings! Be learned, ye that are judges of the earth." *Psalms*.

but, the former has yet some glimmering light that supports, and touches it sensibly, at the remembrance of a friend, whose lineaments absence has not been able to efface.

I often tell old stories, in which Monsieur d'Elbene, de Charleval, and the Chevalier de Riviere have done honour to the moderns. You are also spoken of with advantage upon these occasions; but I am silent on this head, before the members of the French Academy, who have declared for the antients *.

I hear of a prologue set to music, which I long to see performed upon our theatre. The beauty who is the subject of it, would raise the envy of the whole audience. All our Helens have not the fortune to be celebrated by a Homer, and ranked among the goddesses of beauty. I have now got very high. How shall I descend again? My dear friend, ought we not to suffer the heart to speak its own language †? The Dutchess of Bouillon looks as if she was but eighteen: the spring of beauty runs through the blood of the Mazarins.

Now our kings are friends, would you not do well to take a trip hither? This would be to me the greatest blessing of the peace. Adieu,

B. 4

and

* There was a curious criticism about that time, among the Literati of France, whether the antients or moderns were superior in point of genius. Fontenelle wrote an Essay on this subject, replete with wit and good sense. He determines, like a true philosopher, that nature has been always equal in her productions; consequently, the capacities of mankind at all times the same. He humorously asks the *Fauteurs* of Antiquity, whether the trees were taller in those days, than at present?

† She speaks this in opposition to figurative or poetic manners of expression.

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and be assured that I still love you more tenderly, than philosophy admits of.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

I HAVE a sensible pleasure in beholding young, handsome and blooming persons, who are capable of raising any sort of emotion in a heart so old as mine. As there has always been a great resemblance between our tastes, humours, and sentiments, I think you will not be displeased to see a young nobleman who has had the merit and address of rendering himself agreeable to all the ladies on our side of the water. I have therefore desired the Duke of St. Alban's to visit you, as much for his own satisfaction, as for yours.

Pray let me know how our old friend de Gourville does ; and prithee, use your interest with him to send me some good wine. I lodge with Monsieur de l'Hermitage, one of his relations, a very honest man, who fled hither, on account of religion. It was unlucky for him that the consciences of the French catholics would not suffer him to stay in his own country, or that the scrupulousness of his own, obliged him to leave it. He certainly deserves the esteem of his cousin.

If there comes over with Mareschal Tallard, any of our friends, of the merit of our time, to whom I can render any manner of service, I pray you command me.

The Countess of Sandwich is going to France, for her health. The late Earl of Rochester, her father, had more wit than any in England : she has more wit than her father, as much generosity

nerosity as wit, and is every other way as amiable as she is liberal and ingenious.

Doctor Morelli, my particular friend, accompanies her. Prithce facilitate his acquaintance with all your celebrated Genii. If he has yours, I esteem him sufficiently happy. You cannot introduce him to any person of so singular a merit as yourself * . * . * .

I think that Epicurus made one part of his *chief good* to consist in the remembrance of things past. There is no *Summum Bonum* for a man of a hundred years old like me †. But there are still some comforts left; and that of remembering you, and all that I have heard you say, is one of my greatest.

I write a great many things that you will not much attend to; nor do I really consider whether they may be tedious to you, or no. 'Tis enough that I amuse myself at this age. I have not the presumption to imagine I can be capable of pleasing others. My sole merit is to be able to content myself; and I am very happy in being still capable of doing so, by writing to you.

Adieu.

N I N O N.

HOW came you to imagine that the sight of a young man would be agreeable to me? You judge, I suppose, of other people's sentiments by your own: but, I have forgot e-

* Here St. Evremond enters into a long detail of the Doctor's character; but as it had no relation to this correspondence, I have thought proper to leave out the passage.

† He speaks figuratively; as he was then near ninety.

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very thing now, except my friends; and if the title of *Doctor*, had not given me courage, your English folks should never have heard a word from me.

My porter told them I was not at home, and took your letter, which gave me as much pleasure as any I had ever received from you. How desirous you are of having good wine, and how unhappy am I that cannot accommodate you! Monsieur de l'Hermitage could tell you as well as I, that de Gourville does not stir out of his chamber. He is pretty much indifferent about all manner of tastes. A good friend still: but people never think of employing him, for fear of giving him trouble. However, if upon any opportunity that I do not foresee, I can use my address for the wine, you may depend upon me.

Mareschal Tallard was formerly one of my friends; but great affairs make great men negligent of things that are useless to them. I am told that the Abbé du Bois will go over with him: he is a little, lively man, that I fancy will please you.

I have twenty of your letters in my possession. They are read here with great applause. You see that a good taste is not quite extinct in France. I was charmed at that part of your last, where you are not much concerned about being tiresome; and in truth, you are wise if you are henceforward only concerned about yourself. Not but that the opinion is false, with regard to you, "That you are no longer capable of pleasing others."

Farewel.

S T.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

YOUR life, my dear friend, has been too illustrious not to be continued uniformly to the end. Let not La Rochefaucault's hell alarm you*. ---- It was a premeditated one, that he wanted to make a sentiment of. Pronounce then, the word *Love*, boldly; but never suffer that of *Old Age*, to slip out of your lips. There is so much spirit in your letter, that there is not the least room to imagine you even at the beginning of a decline. What ingratitude then, to become ashamed of that charming passion, to which you are indebted, both for your merit and your pleasures? Acknowledge all your passions, to give the full merit to all your virtues.

However, you have expressed but one half of your character. --- Nothing can be better than that part which relates to your friends: nothing more flat than what regards your lovers. I shall draw your picture at full length, in a few lines; and please to accept it here, framed out of all the qualities that you either have, or ever did possess.

Fickle in love, in friendship still sincere;
 Love has her transports; friendship virtues rare:
 Indulgent Nature has to Ninon given
 Two characters, befitting Earth or Heaven;
 Epicurean taste to revel here,
 And Cato's virtues to insure her there †.

Adieu.

S T.

* He filed *Old Age* the hell of women.

† The French verses contain twenty lines; but as there is but one thought in them, spun out by repetitions, I have only

S T. EVREMOND.

I HAVE been inquiring after you, from all the world, for these twelve months past, and could not receive any manner of information. At length, Monsieur de la Bastide gave me some account of you. He says that you are well, and that tho' you have not now so many lovers, as formerly, you seem perfectly contented with having preserved a great number of friends.

The improbability of this last article, makes me doubt the truth of the former. You were born to love all the days of your life. There is a resemblance between lovers and gamesters: *Whoever has loved, will always love.* If I had been told that you had become devout, I might have believed it; for this is passing from a human passion, to a divine one; 'tis still supplying employment for the soul: but not to love, is a kind of annihilation; which can never suit with the natural frame of your mind.

I beg you will inform me of your health, your temper and your occupations; and this in a very long letter, that must contain but little morality, and a great deal of affection for your old friend. As for news, relating to peace or war, I ask you none: I neither write any thing of that kind myself, nor do I care to receive any.

Adieu. The truest and most affectionate of your humble servants would gain much by your having

only translated the six last, in which the whole spirit of the Epigram consists.

" The Sterling *Bullion* of one English line,
 " Drawn to *French wire*, would through whole pages
 shine. POPE.

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 13

having no lovers; for he would then be the first of your friends, in spite of an absence that we may call eternal.

N I N O N.

I DARE say that Dulcinea never recollected her Chevalier with more pleasure. Your letter was received as it deserved; and the *sorrowful countenance** did not in the least, diminish the merit of your sentiments. I feel a fond pleasure at their vigour and continuance—preserve them, to the confusion of dotage.

I agree with you that wrinkles are shrewd signs of wisdom; and am pleased to find that your *exterior* merits have not lowered your spirits. I endeavour myself, at the same philosophy!

Adieu.

N I N O N.

I HAVE sent an answer to your last letter, to the Abbé du Bois' correspondent; but he being at Versailles, I am afraid that it was not delivered to him. I should have been very uneasy about your health, if I had not received a visit from Madame de Bouillon's good little Librarian, who gave me extreme pleasure by shewing me a letter concerning you, from a person who thinks of me, upon your account †.

Whatever

* He used to sign some of his letters to L'Enclos, in his old age, *The Knight of the sorrowful Countenance*; from a character in Don Quixote.

† The Dutchess of Mazarin, who lived then in England.

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Whatever reason I had in my sickness, to be thankful to my friends and the world, I have met with nothing that affected me with a more lively sense, than that mark of kindness. Do in this matter, all that you are obliged to, since it is owing merely to you that I have received this favour.

How do I envy those who go to England! and how delighted should I be to dine with you once more! Is there not something gross and mean in mentioning a dinner? The mind has great advantages over the body: however, in return, this same vulgar mechanism often furnishes certain relishes, that help to relieve the soul from uneasy reflections. You have sometimes laughed at those I used to make: I have now banished them all: 'tis too late for them at our period of life: we ought to content ourselves with the day in which we live. Near hopes, whatever philosophers may say, are as much to be prized, as those that are farther extended—for they are more certain.

Here is fine morality for you! I wish you good health, for that is the point to which every thing should tend.

Adieu.

N I N O N.

THE Abbé du Bois delivered me your letter, and spoke as well of your appetite, as of your intellects. There is a certain time of life, when we value a good stomach more than the understanding; and I confess to my shame, that I deem you happier in enjoying the one than the other. I always thought that your judgment would be as long-lived as yourself; but
we

we cannot be so certain of the health of the body; without which there is nothing left but sad reflections. I find myself insensibly falling into them, but I shall immediately turn to another subject.

It relates to a pretty young man, whom the desire of seeing persons of the best note in all countries, has tempted to break away from his family, without waiting for their consent. Perhaps you may blame his too early curiosity; but the thing is done. He knows many things, and is ignorant of others that one of his age ought not to know. I thought him worthy of paying his respects to you, in order to make him sensible that he has not lost his time by going to England. I have spoken likewise to his elder brother, who is my particular friend, to direct him to wait on the Dutchess of Mazarin, and Lady Harvey, since they have been pleased to remember me.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

YOUR letter has a great deal of good sense in it. You praise the stomach to so much advantage, that henceforth it will be a shame to have a good understanding, without a good appetite at the same time. I am obliged to the Abbe du Bois, for having gained me your esteem, by this favourable character. At eighty-eight years of age I eat oysters every morning; I dine heartily, and sup tolerably.---Heroes have been celebrated for less merit than mine.

When I was young, I admired nothing but the pleasures of the mind; being more indiffe-
rent

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rent about the concerns of the body, than I ought to have been. Now, I make amends as much as possible, for my former partiality, either by the indulgences I give it, or the esteem and friendship I have lately conceived for it.

Your method was quite the reverse, you had some concern for the body, in your youth: at present, you are occupied only about what relates to the mind. I know not whether you have reason to value it so much as you do. For my part, I can scarce read any thing worth retaining, and hardly hear any thing worth listening to. How difficult soever the intellects are at my age, the impressions that agreeable objects make upon the senses, affect me still: and we are much in the wrong to take such pains to mortify them. It is perhaps a jealousy of the mind, that looks upon their lot to be better than its own.

Monsieur Bernier, who was the prettiest philosopher I ever knew, (*pretty philosopher* is an odd expression, but his figure, his stature, his manner and conversation, give him a just title to this epithet) Monsieur Bernier, I say, speaking of the mortification of the senses, said to me one day, "I will let you into a secret, with which I would not intrust Madame de la Sabliere, nor even Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, whom I take to be of a superior kind; but I tell it to you in confidence, that *abstinence from pleasure, appears to me to be a great sin* *."

I was

* This *pretty philosopher* speaks on the epicurean principles; or rather, like a libertine, without any principle at all, as his doctrine is quite repugnant to the orthodoxy of his own church, which enjoins fasts, penances and mor-

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 17

I was surprized at the novelty of this system. It left, however, some impression upon me. If he had continued his lecture, perhaps he might have given me a thorough taste for his doctrine.

Continue your friendship to me; which has never been impaired. A rare thing in so long a commerce as ours.

Adieu.

N I N O N.

THE Count de Clerembaut gave me a sensible pleasure by telling me that you remember me, which I really deserve, on account of my constant affection for you. We two shall merit the admiration of posterity for the duration of our lives, and that of our friendship. I fancy I shall live as long as you, but am often weary with doing continually the same thing; and I commend the Swiss, who drowned himself for that single reason.

My friends sometimes check me on this score; and assure me that life is desirable while it is attended with tranquility and a sound mind. Vigour of body gives us other sentiments, one would prefer that to vigour of mind; but what
fig-

mortifications. Had he admitted an exception against *evil* pleasures, his sentiment would not only have been more philosophic, but agreeable also to the most rational christianity.

“ The blessings thy free bounty gives

“ Let me not cast away;

“ For God is paid, when man receives,

“ To enjoy is to obey.

Pope's Universal Prayer.

signifies it when one cannot make the exchange? and 'tis as good to avoid reflections as make those which are of no use.

Lady Sandwich has given me a thousand satisfactions in the happiness I have of pleasing her. I did not imagine that at my time of life, I could render myself an agreeable companion to a woman of her age. She has more wit than all the women in France, and more true merit too. She is going to leave us, which gives concern to every one who knows her here, but most particularly to me. Had you been here, we should have made entertainments worthy of the antients.

The Count de Grammont is grown so young again, that I think him as lively as when he hated sick people, and loved them when they had recovered their health. You have wedded me to the Dutchess of Mazarin; and I cannot hear of her welfare without pleasure.

Love me always. *Adieu*. But why don't we say, *Good-morrow*? We ought not to die without seeing one another.

N I N O N.

WHAT a loss have you sustained! If we were not to be lost ourselves, it would be impossible for us ever to be comforted. I heartily condole with you. You are deprived of an amiable friend, whose converse supported your spirits in exile. How is such a misfortune to be retrieved? The loss of friends is a tax on age! Philosophy must be your only resource now! I am as much affected at her death, as if I had the honour of the Dutchess of Mazarin's acquaintance.

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 19

acquaintance. She thought of me in my sufferings; I was touched with that goodness; and her being so dear to you, made me love and esteem her still more. There is no remedy for this misfortune; nor is there any against those that happen to our own poor bodies. Take care of yours: your friends are rejoiced to see you so healthy—and so wise,—for I reckon those only wise, who know how to render themselves happy.

I return you many thanks for the tea you were pleased to send me: The humour and gayety of your letter, pleased me still more than the present.

You will soon have Lady Sandwich with you again, whom we behold with great regret just on the eve of her departure *. I wish that her way of life may afford you some consolation. I don't know the English manner, but this lady has been perfectly French among us.

Adieu, Sir, a thousand times. If one could think, like Madame de Chevreuse, who fancied when she was dying, that *she was going to chat with her friends in the other world*, one might receive some comfort from such a thought.

N I N O N.

YOUR letter has filled my mind with unprofitable wishes, which I did not think myself any longer capable of. “The days pass away,” as good Des Yvetaux used to say, “in ignorance and in idleness; yet unhappily, these same days are imputed to account, and
“swallow

* She died lately in France, in a very advanced age.

20 LETTERS BETWEEN

"swallow up both the persons and things that we are most attached to." You have experienced this last particular in a severe manner. You formerly said, *that I should die of nothing but reflections*. I endeavour to avoid making any more, and to forget to-morrow the time I have lived to day. Every one tells me that I have less reason to complain of time than any body; but be this as it may, if any body had proposed such a life to me formerly, I should have hanged myself first. Yet we cling to an ugly body as much as to an handsome one: We love to feel ease and rest *.

I have still a pretty good appetite: I wish heartily that I had an opportunity of trying it with yours, and of talking about all the original characters we have known; the remembrance of whom rejoiceth me more than the presence of a great many people that I every day converse with.

Monsieur de Clerembaut often asks me whether he resembles his father as to his parts? I tell him, No—But I hope from his self-sufficiency, that he accepts this negative in his favour: and perhaps, some people may think so. What comparison between this age, and that we have seen!

You

* Behold the miserable condition of old age! Tired to stay, yet loth to go! With sense, wit, philosophy, beauty, admiration, lovers, friends, health and fortune, if the happy Ninon de l'Enclos was reduced to such a state, what a wretchedness must it be to all the rest of the world, to survive to her years? No patience, but that of a christian, can be sufficient to support the wearied soul through such an unvaried journey. And can any thing shew the peculiar excellence, the divine temperament of our religion, more than this, that while it makes us most wish to go, leaves us best contented to stay?

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 21

You will soon see Lady Sandwich; but I am afraid that she goes into the country. She knows all that you think of her. She will tell you more news of this country than I can do. She has examined and sounded every thing to the bottom. She perfectly knows all my haunts; and has found the way not to be a stranger here.
Adieu.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

THE last letter I receive from Madame de l'Enclos always appears to me the best; and this is not because the sense of the present pleasure prevails over the remembrance of the past; but the true reason is, that your mind receives new vigour and improvement every day. If it be with your health as with your understanding, I shall but ill maintain the challenge you propose, on the best appetite. I made trial of mine against Lady Sandwich, at an entertainment the other day at Lord Jersey's, and was not worsted. Her ladyship's wit is acknowledged by all the world, and her good taste is manifest by the extraordinary esteem she expresses for you. She did not get the better of me in praising you, any more than in eating.

You are of all countries; as much esteemed at London, as at Paris. You are of all times; and when I alledge you for the honour of mine, the young immediately name you to give the same advantage to theirs. Thus are you mistress both of the past and present: I wish with all my soul, that you may yet extend your power considerably over the future! It is not fame I have here in view; that is sufficiently secured to you already:

22 LETTERS BETWEEN

already : I am thinking of what is more essential, namely, life; of which eight days are more worth, than eight centuries of glory after death.

“ If any one had proposed such a life to you “ formerly, you would have hanged yourself “ first.” This expression charms me—And yet, you content yourself with *ease and rest*, after having tasted the most lively pleasures. There is not any one who sets a greater value on youth than I; and as I have nothing of it but the remembrance only, I follow your example, and make the most of the current minutes that I can. Would to Heaven that the Dutchess of Mazarin had been of our mind ! She would then have been still alive. But she would needs die the greatest beauty in the world*.

Live—For life is good, while it is free from pain. Farewel.

N I N O N.

WIT is a dangerous talent in friendship. Your letter would have undone any one but myself. I know your lively and surprizing imagination, and yet was obliged to recollect that Lucian had written in praise of a fly, in order to render your stile familiar to me. Would to Heaven that you really thought of me as you speak ! I should then dispense with *all nations*. For 'tis to your merit that the honour of that compliment more justly belongs.

Your letter is a master-piece. It has been the subject of all the conversations held at my apartments, this month past. You retrieve your youth

* She used cosmetics laterally, which destroyed her health.

youth again—You do well to love it. Philosophy and wit agree perfectly well together: what signifies wisdom if it does not allure? I am certain that you must ever please, while you preserve the same turn of mind and sentiment you possess at present.

Few people are able to resist old age; but I fancy that I am not yet sunk under the weight of it. I could wish with you that the Dutchess of Mazarin had regarded life in itself, without thinking of her face, which would have been lovely to the last, though good sense had taken the place of some few charms.

Lady Sandwich will always preserve the spirit of her wit, when she loses her youth; at least, this is my opinion. When you see her, pray make her remember me, for it would give me concern to be forgotten by her.

Adieu.

S T. E V R E M O N D.

I Received a letter from you in the month of December, that was dated the fourteenth of October. 'Tis somewhat stale for a letter, but good things are welcome, though ever so late. You write gravely, and yet you charm: You render Seneca agreeable, which is a new character for him: You speak of your age, with all the spirit of youth*. I have one curiosity which you can satisfy me about. Prithce, when you reflect upon your younger days, does not the remembrance of times past, occasion certain sentiments to arise, equally distant from the languor of indolence, and the strength of

* Seneca wrote a treatise on old age.

of passion? Pray now, don't you sometimes, feel in your heart, a secret opposition to that tranquil apathy, that you had flattered yourself you had calmed your mind into? For, to love, and be beloved, is a charming sympathy, which has blended itself in your breast, even with your very reason. To stop the current of amorous affections, one must interrupt the course of our days; for its only end is that of life.

Would to Heaven the fates may still continue to you thirty years more, of love and philosophy—This is what I pray for, on this first of the year 1701. A day on which those who have nothing better to bestow, make a new year's gift of their good wishes.

Adieu.



T H E
T R A N S L A T O R

To the R E A D E R.

 H E R E ends the correspondence between that charming old couple, St. Evremond and Madame de l'Enclos. We may perceive from many hints in these letters, that several have been lost, on both sides; which I dare say the reader of any taste, must join with me in regretting.

There is a gayety and spirit in these writings, that would render the youngest persons amiable; but to meet with all the chearfulness of youth, joined to the sense and judgment of maturity, without the least symptom of that weakness of mind, or decay of understanding, which generally attend that stage of life, which is therefore stiled the years of *dotage*, must not only surprize, but render these extraordinary persons famous to all posterity*.

These writings must equally please all ages. Here the young and gay may rejoice in the

* St. Evremond was near ninety years, and l'Enclos above fourscore, when most of these letters were written.

highest spirit of wit and galantry; and the old triumph at instances exempt from the usual, but despicable effects of senescence. May these excellent examples serve to rouse up the supineness of all who are *declining in the vale of years*, and spirit them to exert some effort to preserve their intellectual faculties from a lethargy! For I am convinced that dotage, though the usual, is not a necessary effect of age. But the mind grows indolent about the middle stage of life; and then the exercise of reading and reflection, which is requisite to prevent our sense and apprehension from stagnating, becomes too great a labour to us, unless an happy and more early habit should have rendered it easy and familiar.

One may well imagine that I could not rest satisfied here, or acquiesce in an opinion that there had not been any memoirs of so remarkable a woman, preserved in some of the French Tracts of the last age, except what are contained in these letters. Besides, the anecdotes that I quoted from *The World*, hinted to me something further, but left me still at a loss how to direct my inquiry; when a friend of mine procured me an entertaining collection of detached pieces, lately published in France, under the title of *Le Petit Reservoir*, where I met with the following memoirs of this famous personage, which will afford a very high entertainment to the English reader, even through a translation.

The French writer begins with the following prefatory letter, addressed to a lady.

“ You have required from me, most amiable Eugenia, the history of Madame de l’Enclos, and I have been too hasty in promising it to you;
for

for the searches I have made to satisfy your curiosity, have not been as successful as I could wish; and I cannot supply you with any thing more than a slight and imperfect sketch of her character and memoirs. As for the rest, you are not to expect in the course of her life, a number of interesting events, which are produced by the passions when they are obliged to oppose the veil of mystery to the yoke of importunity and restraint *. Nor will you here meet with either the subtleties of coquetry, the artifices of infidelity or the heinousness of perfidy. Love, liberty, and philosophy, in her walked hand in hand. She had a noble soul, but it had at the same time, a sensibility which forced her to yield to the lively impressions of her taste and appetites; and she had the address of joining with a certain air of congruity, the most galant conduct with the most worthy principles. She was a faithful friend, whose virtue was guided by reason, and whose heart neither knew infidelity or deceit.

However, notwithstanding these rare and estimable qualities, few people at present, acknowledge or agree about her merit. Her worth by degrees begins to be forgotten, her foibles only discoursed of or remembered. The young look upon her as a person of great affectation, the women as one without morals,

* This passage is forced and obscure. It alludes I suppose, to romances, where the heroines are obliged to conceal their affections from the *importunity* of their lovers, and their actions from the *restraint* of their guardians. In his next paragraph he takes in Novel, "Nor will you here, &c."

28 THE TRANSLATOR, &c.

and the rest of the world as a finished picture of prejudice and enthusiasm *.

But you, my fair Eugenia, who are blessed with sense and judgment, at an age when other women possess nothing more than beauty: you that judge nothing but yourself with severity, will, I dare say, render justice to her character. You, madam, will acknowledge her to be, what, in reality she was, the most amiable of her sex; and will not be surprized that with a superior genius, an undecaying beauty, and many other extraordinary qualities, she should have been the delight of society, and the admiration of the age she lived in.

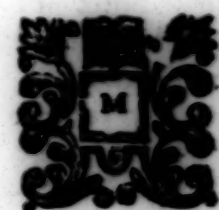
I am, Madam, &c."

* Nothing can be so absurd as the first and last of these opinions about her character; as neither of them can be supported by any passage in her life or writings. 'Tis said that most people have two characters; but I believe Ninon is the first that ever had three. She certainly had two, like other people, only with this remarkable peculiarity, that she deserved them both; namely, a good one, and a bad one.

THE



T H E
L I F E and C H A R A C T E R
O F
N I N O N de L' E N C L O S.



ADEMOISELLE de l'Enclos, who under the name of Ninon, has rendered herself famous in the last age, by the charms of her wit as well as her person, was only child of Monsieur de l'Enclos, a gentleman of Touraine, and of Mademoiselle de Raconis his wife, a lady of Orleans. She was born in Paris, on the *Ides of May*, 1616, and was christened Anne *.

Her father had served in the army when he was a young man, about the latter end of Henry the fourth's and the beginning of Lewis the thir-

* Which is Ninon, in French.

teenth's reigns. Being remarked for one of the malecontents of his time, he was selected under this character, by the famous cardinal de Retz, among the number of his friends, and continued attached to his interest, during the remainder of his life. Her mother was a great devotee, with a very narrow understanding.

Monsieur de l'Enclos, though a man of politics and faction, was a person of good sense and literature; and among other talents was a perfect master of music, and an extraordinary performer on the lute: which occasioned the mistake of those who reported that Ninon was the daughter of a lutanist. But her father who loved her passionately, had the fondness to teach her himself on this instrument, and she became a most perfect mistress of it.

Her mother, who had a mind to make her a devotee, like herself, brought her every day to morning and evening prayers along with her; but the little Ninon always carried some entertaining book of history or poetry in her pocket, which she used to read by stealth, while she was on her knees.

She lost her parents when she was very young: 'till which time she was reared up by a father who doted on her, and a mother that thwarted her in every thing. A rare education to form a capricious conduct! But without entering into the particulars of her *first life*, it may be sufficient to say, that she was so happily endowed by nature, that she almost framed herself without assistance. She had an high esteem for her father's understanding, and *too great* a deference for his opinions. But tho' the quickness of her apprehension, soon made her perceive

perceive the foibles of her mother, this never took off, in the least, from that respect and duty which became a child.

Her mother died when Ninon was but fourteen years old, and her father survived her only a year. So that at the tender and hazardous age of fifteen, she became mistress of herself and fortune. But, notwithstanding her extreme youth, she was found to have a manly sense, without masculine manners; was chearful without levity; had wit without pertness; a nice discernment, sound judgment, and delicate taste.

Her stature was above the middle size; her person neither too plump or lean; well made and finely proportioned: altogether of an engaging figure; but fitter to bear examining, than to strike at first sight. She had a very fair smooth skin, with a remarkable freshness in her complexion; her face a fine oval, her eyes large and hazle; her eye-brows dark, and well separated, with long eye-lashes; her hair of a deep chestnut colour; her nose well made, but rather high; her lips vermilion, her chin plump, her mouth prettily fashioned, and expressing an agreeable smile. She had a good forehead, fine teeth, and a neck beautifully turned. She had graceful arms, pretty hands, a strait genteel shape, and very handsome limbs.

She had a *well bred voice* in speaking*; an open countenance, but sensible, tender and engaging: a remarkable air of neatness and delicacy in her appearance; gayety and sweetness in her manners; a certain grace in every gesture;

* There is something, even in the tone of a voice, which distinguishes a gentleman from a plebeian. A polite ear will readily catch it.

a soul fondly devoted to pleasure; and a mind fraught at the same time, with the most angelic virtues.

She had a warm, earnest manner of expression, which without staying to convince, persuaded one in her opinions. She had every address of coquetry, with all the spirit of gallantry: her whole air was capable of inspiring the warmest sentiments; for she was possessed of those bewitching graces, that a desire to charm can render a fine woman mistress of; and she herself seemed to breathe the same passion with which she inspired her admirers.

As to the rest, she was violent, hurried away by her taste and inclinations; eager and lively about the least matters that affected herself; cold, careless and indolent where her heart was not interested; and pretty insensible to most things in which she had herself not any concern. Such was the famous Ninon de l'Enclos. How many particulars may one pick up here, to palliate or excuse her failings!

Her beauty and other outward accomplishments inconsiderable advantages in comparison of her understanding and merit, occasioned her to be sought after, very young, to be obtained in marriage; and surrounded her with a crowd of suitors. But, as she had, even then, a singular aversion to matrimony, and a spirit determined for liberty, she could never be prevailed upon to think of fixing herself in such a scheme of life.

Her father too, who had himself experienced some disagreeable circumstances in that state, far from speaking favourably to her with regard to conjugal connections, had often freely recommended to her to follow the plan of conduct
which

which she afterwards pursued through the whole course of her life; and even on his death bed, calling her to him, spoke to her in the following terms.

“ My dear daughter, you see that all which
 “ remains to me in these last moments, is only
 “ the fruitless remembrance of pleasures that
 “ now abandon me; the possession of which has
 “ not been of any long continuance, and this
 “ is the chief thing that I have reason to com-
 “ plain of providence in. But alas! my repin-
 “ ings now are vain! You, my child, who have
 “ so many years to survive me, profit yourself
 “ early, of your precious time. *Be always less*
 “ *scrupulous about the number, than the choice of*
 “ *your pleasures*.*”

Ninon quickly perceived a world of good sense in an advice so very agreeable to her own inclinations, and immediately prepared herself to follow his instructions. She lived alone, but had a considerable number of acquaintanc and friends, which every day increased, as she had collected in herself the most engaging talents; for besides her wit, sense and beauty, she was perfect mistress of music, played extremely well on the harpsichord, lute, theorbo and guitar. She had only a weak chamber voice, but sung with an extreme fine taste, and danced with most admirable grace.

She never sacrificed much time at her toilette, but was always by so much the genteeler dressed, as she appeared to neglect that article. She generally wore plain but rich cloaths, and conformed constantly to the different modes of the

* The French writer makes no manner of reflection upon this extraordinary passage, but I hope that the English reader is shocked at the whole paragraph.

times, and of her own age. She had great vivacity in her manners, but a remarkable mildness of disposition, at the same time. She possessed the art of acquiring friends, and still more, of preserving them. Though she was light in her engagements, and inconsiderate in her amours, she was extremely careful in the management of her fortune, and regular in the disposition of her whole œconomy; the fund of which was about ten thousand livres life annuity*; of which she always reserved one year's income beforehand, that she might have it in her power to assist her friends upon any emergency.

She had few domestics; a waiting maid, a valet de chambre, a footman, coachman, and cook, composed her household; but she had the art of having herself well served, always preserved her port, and had a certain air of dignity in every thing she did.

She might have justly said, that she had been her own preceptor, and was but very little indebted to any other person for the improvement of her taste and understanding. Before ten years of age she had read Montaigne and Charron†; and at fourteen, was celebrated through Paris for her wit and sense. She perfectly understood Spanish and Italian; had read with application, the best authors in either of these languages, and spoke them both with great ease. Historians, philosophers, poets antient and modern, even romances, nothing had escaped her reading. She had enriched her mind with all the beauties and treasures of antiquity, to which she had

* About five hundred pounds a year.

† A French writer in morality, of high esteem.

"Say sage Montaigne, or yet more sage Charron."

had joined the flowers of modern erudition : and though she had no knowledge of Greek or Latin, she was an excellent critic in the best translations of Vaugelas and Ablancourt*. She wrote as she spoke, which was with a charming ingenuous simplicity, and always extempore. She had an elevation of mind, a greatness of soul, vast delicacy in her sentiments, and infinite grace in her manner of expression.

She used to recount some of her adventures, and told a story remarkably well ; but seldom did it, because she hated to say the same thing twice. One day Mignard, the famous painter, lamented before her, that his daughter had a bad memory ; *I wish you joy, says she, for then she cannot quote.* She was a great enemy to quotations, because they are apt to tire the company, and in some sort to humble them at the same time. Her knowledge was void of ostentation, accompanied always with modesty, and a polite regard to those she conversed with. She knew a great deal, but never affected to shew it.

What a difference between this charming woman, and the generality of the present triflers, of whom a pretty face comprehends their entire merit ! Endowed neither with character, sentiment or manners ; whose highest employment is knotting, and vacation cards ; without reading, or conversation, except what they pick

* Are Greek and Latin more difficult to attain than French and Italian ? No. How comes it to pass then, that women shall be reckoned more *learned* for understanding the former, than the latter ? That they shall be deemed more accomplished for being perfectly versed in one, and become subjects of ridicule for the least smattering in the other ? But the *dead languages* happen to be ingrossed by men ; these are their peculiar privileges, and they are up in arms when we invade their provinces.

pick up, like parrots, from one another: who without the mean and dangerous aids of play, scandal or galantry, are quite incapable of supplying any one topic of social converse: who acquire nothing more by increase of years, but an addition of ridiculous follies; and when their admirers, declining by degrees, at length forsake them, retire forlorn, to spleen, vapours, and *repining* prayer.

“ By acts of piety compound for evil,

“ And yield to God the leavings of the devil.”

She lived in Parliament-street, behind the Palace royal, in a house that she had purchased for life. It was small, but extremely neat and convenient: it contained two apartments; in the first, was a very handsome, large drawing room, where she received her company, who used to assemble there about five in the evening, and break up at nine. This salon was adorned with the portraits of her principal friends, and other paintings done by the most eminent masters. She placed her library and harpsichord here. At the farther end of the second apartment, there was a small room, more elegantly furnished than any other part of the house. The history of *Psyche* was painted, *al fresco*, on the cieling; and all the pannels portrayed with the most galant adventures of antient fable. None of the cruelties of love were here described; they were banished even in idea, from this free scene, where every thing seemed to breathe successful passion.

It was here she chose usually to sit, and retire to when her company happened to be small; and it was here she kept her lute. She seldom played; but when she did, one might imagine it to have been her sole occupation. Upon these occasions

casions one was made almost amends for the loss of her conversation; as she had the power to infuse her very spirit into the instrument, and to draw from thence such flattering sounds, expressions, if I may so speak, so sensible and tender, that she seemed to breathe her soul through the various tones of harmony, and her fingers might be said to have uttered sentiment. She had also a little country house at the Cordeliers, very pleasantly situated with regard to air, wood, and water; and in this retreat she used to spend her summer months, and frequently the autumn ones also.

Though Madame de l'Enclos had a soul naturally formed for galantry, she was never coquetish or inconstant. While her passion subsisted, she loved with sincerity and fidelity; for she was incapable of the least deceit or dissimulation: but, the moment that her liking ceased, which sometimes happened at an instant when she least expected it, all commerce of this kind, with that party, was at an end for life.

As to the rest of her character, she was of an even temper, and most engaging converse; an excellent friend, generous, disinterested, of great veracity, just, a strict observer of her word, steady in society, and of most remarkable honesty*.

Among

* There may appear some contradictions in this sketch of her character, when compared to one or two features of it, drawn in the first part of these memoirs. She is there said to have *every address of coquetry*---cold, careless and indolent, where her heart was not interested.---Here it is said, she was *neither coquetish*---that she was *disinterested*.---But do I not think there need be any difficulty here. For, she might have employed *every address of coquetry* before she had fixed her engagements: and have laid aside all

Among her lovers was Monsieur de Gourville†; a man of refined sense and gallantry, greatly esteemed for his many good qualities, and closely attached to the Prince of Condé. In the year 1650, at the time of the civil war, stiled *La Fronde*, finding himself on the sudden, proscribed and obliged to quit the kingdom before he had time to adjust the œconomy of his affairs, he waited upon Madame de l'Enclos, the evening before his departure, and brought her twenty thousand gold crowns, which he begged she would keep safe for him 'till he might be at liberty to return. But, because he did not think it prudent to intrust his whole fortune into one hand, he deposited the like sum with Monsieur de - - - , a man in those days, remarkable for the strictness of his morals, for the sway he bore over tender consciences, and the extraordinary character he had in Paris, for his honesty.

In about two months, Madame de l'Enclos, as was not unusual, engaged in a new amour. Poor de Gourville received an account of it in his exile; and was extremely alarmed at the news: he lamented his imprudence frequently, in not having used the precaution of taking some acknowledgment for the deposit, which it seems in both instances he had neglected: he had con-

fided

all those arts, while she continued in it. She might also have been cold, careless, and indolent, where her heart was not interested, and yet disinterested, where she had made her connections of friendship, love, &c.

But if this does not intirely solve the difficulty, we may refer to note * p. 28. where it is said that most people have *two characters*. And as these anecdotes have been collected from different writers, we may rather be surprized to meet with so much congruity upon the whole.

† The same who has been mentioned in one of her letters to St. Evremond.

fided intirely in her fondness, and had but little dependence on a woman of intrigue, that when her tender connections were dissolved, her moral ties would remain unbroken. And this opinion continued to have such an effect upon his mind, that when he had permission to return, in about six months after, instead of calling upon Madame de l'Enclos, his only care was to go to Monsieur de - - -, and demand the money he had given into his charge; and which he then deemed to be the sum total of his unhappy fortunes. But, what a wretched situation did he find himself in, when this same *bonest man*, notwithstanding his great character for probity, had the impudent villainy absolutely to deny the deposit, and affirmed to his face, that he had never received one shilling in trust from him!

Madame de l'Enclos having heard, some days after, of his arrival, and being surprized at his neglect and the little impatience he had shewn to see her, sent to reproach him for it. He waited upon her, the next morning; and on her observing a settled melancholy in his countenance, and inquiring the cause of his chagrin, he reported to her the story just now recited. "Sir, says she, I have met also with a great
 " misfortune in your absence, and must throw
 " myself intirely on your indulgence for forgiveness. I have lost"----- here she paused
 "-----" the liking I had for you. But, I have
 " not lost my memory. The twenty thousand
 " gold crowns that you left in my care, remain
 " untouched in the same casket which you
 " brought them in. Carry them away with you directly, and whenever you afford me the pleasure
 " of

"of another visit, remember that tho' you have lost a mistress, you have gained a friend."

Every one has heard of her affairs with the Marquis de la Châtres. He was in love with her to distraction; and in the very height of his passion received an order from court, to join the army immediately. They must be separated from each other, perhaps for a long time—*A Lover's age*, at least! and he was to begin his journey the next day. He grew inconsolable, he fell into despair, he cursed his destiny; "What is honour, what is duty! fame, wealth or glory, what are ye to love!" The afflicted Ninon did every thing in her power to calm his love-sick mind: but her caresses, her vows, her protestations, with the most tender adieus, were not of the least avail.

At length, finding that nothing could compose his distraction, she bethought herself of giving him a note under her hand, in which she promised and vowed, that during his absence, nay during his life, she would never love any man in the world but himself. La Châtres was a weak person, and this expedient appeared an admirable security to him. He was transported with joy, kissed the paper an hundred times, put it up carefully in his pocket-book, and parted from her the most contented, and most assured man alive.

But—it was a fatality which she could not resist—the amorous Ninon before his return, had entered into a new engagement. The folly and extravagance of the *promissory note*, occurred strongly to her at that time; and when she had appointed her assignation, she cried out, *To be sure la Châtres has a very responsible bond of mine.* Which expression became afterwards a proverb

proverb at Paris; and she used often to laugh at it herself, whenever it came into her head.

She had an amour also with the Marquis de Gersey, by whom she had that unfortunate son who killed himself for her*. She had afterwards an affair with the Marquis de Villarceaux, whom of all her lovers, was the person she continued her constancy to for the longest time. Their connection lasted about five years, and might have subsisted longer on her part, who was always the first to change, if the accident which shall be mentioned just now, had not interrupted their amour.

He was young, handsome, finely made, and had much the air of a person of quality. His figure was altogether graceful and engaging; and he had a great deal of wit, vivacity and spirit. But with all these agreeable qualities, he was the most irregular man in the world, in affairs of galantry. His chief passion was women; but he was not very delicate in his choice; and often divided his addresses between the most lovely mistress, and the most homely maid.

Besides, which is extraordinary in so free and general a lover, but judging of women's hearts by his own, he was jealous to the last degree. He was sometimes so uneasy about Madame de l'Enclos, even while she was at his own house in the country, where she lived with him for three years, that he used to hide little boys under her bed at night, to watch if any rival was admitted

* This story has been already told in the *Introduction*. The father is there stiled the Count de Greze, as quoted from *The World*: In *Le Petit Reservoir*, he is called the Marquis de Gersey. But, Lord Jersey of England was the person; the name of whose family is Villiers.

42 THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
admitted when at any time he happened to be absent.

The Abbé Scarron, a celebrated author, who was among the number of Madame de l'Enclos' friends, threw aside the gown in the year 1651, and married Mademoiselle d'Aubigné *, who was at that time, but sixteen years old. Madame de l'Enclos soon became acquainted with her, and found her remarkably sensible and agreeable for a young woman of her age. In a little time she contracted a strict intimacy with her, and as Monsieur Scarron's fortunes, by his quitting the church, had been reduced very low, she often lent her money, after the most generous manner; and shewed her in other things, many instances of friendship, when she was under the greatest difficulties.

However, Ninon soon had reason to repent her of this connection; for the lovely Scarron, who was about twenty years younger than herself, paid her back with a sort of involuntary ingratitude, by alienating from her the heart of de Villarceaux, as was hinted above. Madame de l'Enclos was considerably piqued at first, and heartily repented the indiscretion of making an intimate companion of a woman so much younger than herself. But, she had a spirit in every thing—She was persuaded of Madame Scarron's innocence, and knew from her own experience, that lovers are not *perennials*. She soon became reconciled to her, and continued, ever after, one of the sincerest of her friends. And after the death of Monsieur Scarron, which happened in 1660, the sympathy of their taste and humours became stronger ties to cement a fonder union :
so

* Afterwards Madame de Maintenon.

so that for some time, they lived intirely together, sharing the same house and the same bed.

Madame Scarron, being afterwards raised to the most elevated situation of life, never forgot the many instances of friendship she had received from Madame de l'Enclos; and sought frequent occasions of shewing a becoming sense of gratitude.

Madame de l'Enclos had a son by de Villars-eeaux, who was more fortunate than her former, but of a singular character. He was named de la Boissiere. But as the Count d'Etrées immediately succeeded de Villars-eeaux, he used to claim this child as his own; and after several years dispute upon this point, not being able to fix the dates of their respective claims, they one day agreed to throw dice, in order to determine their pretensions. The lot fell to the Count d'Etrées, who becoming afterwards marshal of France, and vice-admiral, put this adoption into the marine, and took care to advance his fortunes.

This Monsieur de la Boissiere was resident mostly at Toulon; he was a very good officer, of remarkable bravery, and highly esteemed in the navy. Music was his only amusement, which he had an extraordinary passion for, though he did not understand it, nor was even acquainted with the notes. He had in his house a very large separate apartment, which he dedicated to the God of Harmony, and was furnished with every kind of musical instrument. Here he used to assemble all the performers that passed through Toulon, in their way to France from Italy, or back again, and after regaling them plentifully with champagne, he would have a concert performed for himself alone, and
never

never desired any other company. He died unmarried at Toulon, 1732, aged seventy six.

The Marquis de Sevigné * paid his addresses to her when she was much advanced in years; but she declined them. She was not to be won but where she particularly liked; and she had no clever opinion of him. She used to say, that he had the simplicity of a dove, a soul of panado, a body of wet paper, and a heart of orange gourd, soufed in snow: in short, a man beyond all manner of description. She had formerly endeavoured to put a little life and spirit into him, by a correspondence she entered into with him, on the subject of galantry. Her letters indeed are allowed to be *Chef d'Oeuvres*, for wit and sentiment, by the concurrent applause of all the ingenious writers since her time: but his have not been transmitted to us, as not being deemed worthy of the press. Nor are they at all necessary to illustrate hers, as she mostly quotes those passages from them which her own refer to †.

Madame de l'Enclos was past sixty years of age, when the famous John Banner, nearly related to the kings of Sweden, threw himself at her feet. This was the person who was afterwards killed in a duel, at London, by Prince Philip of Savoy, in 1686.

But the last of her lovers upon record, and the most extraordinary of her galant adventures, was the story of Abbé Gedoine, which is perhaps

* Son to Madame de Sevigné, of whom we have a collection of letters, to her daughter, that are much esteemed.

† Her letters follow in the course of this work, and will probably make the best part of the readers entertainment here.

haps, the most singular thing of this kind, that ever was remembered*. The amour between them continued about a year. He went into Orleans at that time, which she did not seem pleased with; and he staid longer away than he had promised, at parting. When he came to see her, on his return, "My dear Abbé, said she, the shortest follies are the best. I perceive, somewhat too late, that it was an absurd step in me to accept of your addresses at this age of life. I would not carry on the frolick farther. Let us fairly quit each other this instant, and take leave for the rest of our lives."

Thus after having, at the age of fourscore, inspired a young man of twenty-five, with a real passion for her; it was she who quitted him, and made the first motion of breaking off. The Abbé was sensibly affected at this rupture; however he continued to visit, to love and esteem her, during the remainder of her life; but from that time had never the least commerce with her, except as a friend.

She never drank any thing but water, though she eat very heartily; and was so gay and lively during her meals, that people used to say, *her soup had got into her head*.

She loved every one she esteemed, she used to say, but ingenuously confessed, that she did not always esteem those she loved.

When men, she said once, boast of their ancestry, 'tis probable they have little else to be vain of: wits vaunt themselves upon their talents, because they imagine them to be singular.

* This story has been already told in *The World*, and as it was quoted before, in the *Introduction* to this work, I shall not repeat it here.

lar. But persons of good sense are never proud of any thing. And though she had, during the whole course of her life, been treated with the greatest respect and complaisance, by persons of the highest rank; enough to have flattered the vanity of any other woman; it did not in the least affect her. She knew well the value of such sort of things, and rated them accordingly. And in reality, she was neither insolent, nor vain, nor envious: she was, however, naturally jealous of other women's merit, and this was her only foible.

Christina, Queen of Sweden, who came to Paris in 1656, where she remained for two years, was charmed with the conversation of Madame de l'Enclos, and declared at parting, to the whole court, that she had not met with any woman in France, whom she liked or admired so much as the *illustrious Ninon*; which was her expression.

Christina loaded her with presents and encomiums, and took all the pains in her power, to prevail on her to go with her to Rome. But, praises only render those giddy, who are not much used to them.---They did not make Ninon vain. She returned her Majesty a great many thanks for the kind attachment she had expressed towards her, but suffered her to travel away without her.

She had but an indifferent opinion of mankind in general, and has said, that when sin knocks with a purse of gold at the door of indigence, it is very rarely refused admittance.

She had a great talent for reflections; and had she spent her life in writing, instead of *living*, we should have been in possession of one instance, at least, to prove modern wit equal to the

the most refined genius of antiquity. I shall here amuse you with some more of her *thoughts upon various subjects*.

They are either to be pitied or condemned who are obliged to have recourse to religion for the conduct of their lives. 'Tis a sign they have either a narrow soul, or a corrupt heart.

Large hands and a big belly are certain signs of ignobility.

Beauty without grace, is a hook without a bait.

Wrinkles are better placed on the *beel* than the *forehead* *.

We should make provision for food, but never for pleasure; which we should catch extempore.

A woman should never take a lover without the consent of her heart; nor an husband without the concurrence of her reason.

There is nothing in nature so various as the pleasures of love; and yet they are always the same.

The poets were fools to furnish Cupid with a torch, or bow and arrow; for the power of that deity is owing intirely to his blindness.

Love destroys reflection, and reason in its turn, puts an end to love.

It requires infinitely a greater genius to make love, than to make war.

There are certain privileged souls, who are capable of finding in love itself, reasons for still loving on.

How

* Her meaning was, that we should become wise from experience, rather than damp our joys by forecast. Tho' I explain, I condemn the maxim.

How unhappy are women! Their own sex their most inveterate enemy. An husband tyrannizes; a lover dishonours and despises them. Watched on all sides, thwarted in all things; ever in fear and in constraint; without support or succour; with a number of lovers, but not one friend. Is it then to be wondered at that they should become a compound of humour, dissimulation and caprice?

She said one day to Monsieur de St. Evremond, that she returned thanks every night to God, for the strength of her mind, and prayed every morning to preserve it from the weakness of her heart.

St. Evremond was the oldest of her friends: he had never been one of her lovers, but was always enamoured of her wit, sense, and taste; and above all, of that philosophic turn which ran through all her reflections, sentiments, and conduct. He addressed a great many pieces to her, both in verse and prose, that may be found among his works; particularly, an excellent discourse on the morals of Epicurus, which he dedicated to her, under the title of *The modern Leontium*; alluding to a lady of that name at Athens, famous for her galantries and philosophy, which she studied under Epicurus.

Madame de l'Enclos happened to yawn one day, at the reading of a tedious oration that the Abbé Tallemont had spoken upon his reception into the French academy. St. Evremond, who was present, wrote a few extemporary lines, which turned upon this metaphor, that the *figures* of rhetoric are very insipid after *those* of Aretin.

• Le Pere d'Orleans, a Jesuit, author of the *Revolutions of England*, and many other writings,

ings, said to her one day, on account of some articles of faith which had staggered her reason, and suspended her belief; "Madam, while you are waiting for conviction, make a sacrifice of your incredulity to God." Fontenelle to whom she mentioned this particular, told it afterwards to Rousseau, who has made it the *point* of one of his epigrams.

A friend of hers came one day, to make her a confidant of his passion, for one of the finest women at court. "Sir, said she, it must be by the highest respect and assiduity, extreme complaisance, and constant homage, that you can expect to share the great love and admiration, which your mistress has been already inspired with — for her own beauty. Speak to her incessantly of her charms, and but seldom of your passion: for be assured, that she is an hundred times more pleased with the loveliness of her own person, than she can possibly be with all the beauty of your sentiments. But, if ever she should surrender to your solicitations, remember, that in yielding up her heart, she has deposited in your hands, the whole happiness of her life; that she has intrusted you with her honour and repose; and hath thus rendered you the absolute sovereign of her destiny. How few men are responsible for such a confidence!"

Her principal friends were the Countess de la Suze, the Countess d'Olonne, the Marchioness de Castelnau, the Marchioness de la Ferté, the Dutchess de Sully, the Countess de Fiesque, Madame Fayette, Madame Scarron, Madame Choisy, Madame de Sevigné *, Madame de

* The same lady that was mentioned note * p. 44.

Grignan her daughter, Madame du Tort, Madame de Coulange, the Marchioness of Lambert*, the Dutchess de Bouillon-Mancini, Lady Sandwich, and a number more of persons of the best rank in France.

This famous woman died at Paris, on the seventeenth of October, 1706, aged ninety years and five months; mourned and regretted by all her friends and acquaintance. It is of her alone, that one might say with truth, that she had preserved the flowers of spring, even till the autumn was past; and that time, which defaces all things, flew o'er her charms, *like an arrow in the air*, without leaving any trace of its passage behind.

The Abbé Chateauneuf wrote an epitaph for her, in verse, which concludes with this character, that she had the charms of Venus, with the soul of an angel †. He has also drawn her character at large, very finely; and I shall subjoin it here, for your further entertainment.

“As soon as any person became acquainted with Madame de l'Enclos, they immediately rendered justice, both to her merit and her charms, and could not avoid crying out, in their minds, “What elegance! what beauty! graces
 “that dart through the soul! what have I been
 “doing all the rest of my life, which I have
 “suffered to pass away without having seen or
 “known her?”

She always appeared to you the same at last, that she did at first: and as she ever preserved the

* She was the author of several very ingenious tracts, which as well as Madame de Sevigné's letters, are most barbarously translated into English.

† Here is a confusion of theology. An unpardonable blunder in an Abbé.

the charms of her lively wit, her conversation was youthful at fourscore ; and she attained even in her youth, that solidity of sense and judgment which in her advanced years appeared to be the fruit of age and experience : so that many sentiments and reflections of hers when she was a very young woman, may be repeated now, to prove that she was capable of *reasoning* at an age when others are scarce capable of *thinking*. In a word, the strength of her foresight had joined the future to the present, under one view.

The age had often changed its taste, during her *century* ; and fashion did not exert its empire less upon the ways of thinking than it did upon the modes of dress. However Madame de l'Enclos conformed herself successively to the different manners, without being different from herself ; and was always in the fashion without copying any body. She had her *own sense*, and not that of the times ; and when one has the happiness to be blest with true sense in themselves, they have the best sense of all times. In fine, nothing but that equal mixture of solid and agreeable qualities which she possessed, could have preserved that constant tenor of approbation and esteem which she so remarkably enjoyed, through the whole course of her life.

She never affected to appear knowing, but, on the contrary, to claim all the privileges and immunities of ignorance ; and though she had both read and digested a great deal, she seldom remembered what she had read ; but had a singular kind of recollection ; which was, that whenever any historical fact, a verse, or any other passage, happened to have a relation to whatever she, or any body else was conversing

about, they immediately occurred to her mind ; and then became as it were her own, by the use or application she made of the quotation or allusion ; and appeared quite new from the turn she gave them.

If any ridiculous incident or whimsical adventure happened within her knowledge or observation, at any time of her life, she never forgot the least particular of them that was entertaining. And, with what spirit and humour would she relate them ! What would be but a simple tale from the recital of another, became from her description, a perfect scene, the very action itself—both from the justness of the characters, and the exactness and brevity of the story ; in which one could find nothing to add, or to diminish.

Moliere mentioned to me a circumstance relating to her, a few days before he exhibited his *Tartuffe** to the public. We were in company together, where the conversation happened to turn upon the subject of mimicry ; and a person asked him the reason, why the same ridicule that had escaped us in the original character, should afterwards strike us so strongly in the copy ? He answered, that it was because we perceived it then, by the eyes of the mimic, which were quicker than our own. For, added he, *the talent of seeing with ones own eyes, is not given to every body.*

Upon which occasion, he mentioned Madame de l'Enclos to us, as the person in the world, upon whom a ridiculous character made the quickest and most lively impression. He told us that he had read his *Tartuffe* to her some time before ;

* Our play of the Non Juror is taken from this piece.

before; for he used always to consult her upon every piece he writ; as indeed did all the wits of her age; but she paid him back his entertainment, by relating an adventure which she had formerly, with an hypocrite of the same kind; whom she described in so strong and *picturesque* a manner, that he assured us if he had not finished his play, he would never have attempted it; as he would have despaired of being able to produce a character on the stage, so highly drawn as the Tartuffe of Madame de l'Enclos.

As she was so quickly struck with the absurd part of characters, it was not surprizing that she was capable of describing them so well: but, it must still be matter of wonder that so dangerous a talent should never happen to be the cause of her losing any one friend. But, people were always disposed to accept every thing in good part, from a person who never spared any thing that was amiss in herself; and who was always the first to correct in her own behaviour, whatever gave her offence in another's. She was besides, so much above envy or ill nature, she had given so many proofs of the generous and humane disposition of her heart, and her friendship was so estimable, that her railleries were rather accepted as admonitions, than represented as reproaches.

The first use that Madame de l'Enclos made of reason, was to free her mind from common prejudices: She very early began to apprehend that both men and women were subject equally, to the same moral *: according to which
maxim,

* Madame de l'Enclos is perfectly right in her maxim; for there certainly is no such distinction in religion as a male,

maxim, which she made the rule of her conduct, through the course of her life, she could never be induced, either from custom or example, to indulge herself in falsehood, ill nature, scandal, envy, or any of those worthless qualities, which tho' common to women, do nevertheless dishonour their characters, and offend against the rights of civil society *.

But this principle which made her judge of human passions and foibles according to what they are in themselves, independent of gender, made her condemn them with an equal severity in both sexes; for which reason, she abhorred that unjust and tyrannical custom in men, of arrogating to themselves a vain triumph upon that adventure to which they affix infamy in woman: arbitrarily, and contrary to all sense and moral, reducing their virtue to a single point. As if integrity of life and manners, which comprehends the whole, was absolutely interdicted to them. A prejudice not only false in its principle, but so much the more dangerous, as it has often been productive of the most shocking misfortunes of their lives: for, having once happened to fail in what they have been taught to deem their principal, nay almost sole

and female scripture: but she is dangerously wrong in the inference she seems to have drawn from it; for the reasoning on this head should be to *restrain men*, not to *set women free*.

* The Abbé Chateaufeuf has descended here to a very mean and unfair common place sarcasm. The worthless qualities he attributes to us are no more peculiar to women than to men: they are vices common to all weak, base or uneducated minds, whether male or female; and are as frequently to be met with in their sex as ours; but with the addition of some greater and more ungenerous crimes, on their part.

sole obligation, they are apt, too hastily and generally, to conclude, that they have no other duty to regard; (at least, the world does so for them;) and become therefore, careless about every thing else.

“ She sets, like stars which fall to rise no more.”

This gave occasion to the Duke de Rochefaucault, to enter it down among his collection of maxims, that *the least fault in a frail woman, was her frailty*. By which is meant, that as the world is at present constituted, with regard to this particular, it is more unusual, and perhaps more difficult, to stop at that single weakness, than even to get the better of it.

But, if Madame de l'Enclos declared war against so dangerous a prejudice, which by making an amour the highest crime of women, seemed to leave them at liberty to abandon themselves to every other; she equally opposed the romantic error of those, who under the title of a *noble passion*, would elevate love to the dignity of a virtue. She considered it, as it really is, a transitory taste, founded intirely on the illusion of the senses, an inconsiderate affection, tho' a bewitching one, which by its peculiar charms, softens all the cares, and sweetens the bitterness of life; and which alone is capable of filling up all those craving voids that every other passion leaves aching in our breasts. However, a caprice only, or tortuitous sensation; the continuance of which depends neither upon ourselves or others: subject to inconstancy, to disgust, and frequently to repentance.

Upon the whole, she used to sum up her philosophy on this head, with concluding, that as this passion takes its rise meerly from an accidental turn of mind, or a critical disposition of humours, it did not denote the least merit in the beloved object, and was therefore, no manner of compliment to it. Consequently, had no spring to raise our vanity, nor any right to exact return.

But her notions of friendship were quite contrary to these. She bestowed all her confidence and esteem upon this high-prized connection. This, she acknowledged to be a noble, liberal and elevated passion, in which generous commerce she would not admit the least infidelity, inconstancy, or reserve; and would often declare to her lovers, that they had no rivals so much to be jealous of, as her friends.

To conclude; this charming and extraordinary woman has shewn the world, that a delicacy and a moral may be preserved even in libertinism. She extended the career of galantry beyond all former precedent; and continued to be the object of admiration, desire, and esteem, for almost a century; and both her lovers and her friends were persons of the highest rank or station in France. But, she never engaged in any one amour upon this consideration; her galantries were all disinterested; for she thought that there were in love itself, sufficient reasons for loving. She never permitted her lovers any sort of liberality; and was so nice in this particular, as to refuse even the smallest present, which she would, perhaps, have made no scruple of accepting from the hands of another.

She

She liked however, to have her lovers generous in themselves, though she herself declined any advantage from it; as she esteemed it the character of a great and liberal soul. The generosity of true lovers, she used to say, is only an ingenious attention, dictated by a noble and delicate sensation, which is fond, by little assiduities, to entertain the graces of love, without alarming its pleasures *.

She was herself naturally generous; she loved to give, and did it always with most admirable grace; for she shewed a *pleasure* not a *pride* in giving. Her pride was better shewn in refusing the gifts of others; and when those who had been the lovers of her youth, attempted to make her considerable presents when age had diminished her charms, and impaired her health, and her charities had streightened her fortunes, she was more affected with the nobleness of their sentiments, than the liberality of their gifts; and always returned them on the instant; as her spirit was above receiving any thing

* This passage is very ingeniously and delicately imagined and expressed; though the sense of it is not obvious enough to every apprehension. I will give the original words, that the reader may pick his own sense out of them. *La générosité des vrais amans, disoitelle, n'est autre chose qu'une attention ingénieuse, dictée par une sensation noble & délicate, qui se plaît à entretenir, par des petits soins, les graces de l'amour, sans ollarmer ses plaisirs.*

What I take Ninon to have intended here, was to point out that fine address with which a polite lover should behave towards his mistress, for fear of offending against a certain delicacy of sentiment, peculiar to generous minds. Swift gives a definition of a *present* to a superior, in which light a mistress is always to be considered; *something of small value, but not easily to be had for money.* A gallant lover should ever attend to this nice point, lest his gifts should assume the air of *bribes* instead of *presents*.

from the hands of love, or even those of friendship.

People who saw Madame de l'Enclos for the first time, toward the latter end of her life, were surprized at the appearance of that grave mien, and respectable countenance, where sense and philosophy alone seemed to have taken up their seat. They confessed that they sought in vain for those beauties which they had formed so agreeable an idea of; and that they could scarcely perceive any traces of that charming Ninon whom the world had formerly been so much enamoured of. But, notwithstanding her great age, if one examined her eyes, they would perfectly agree with the Abbé Gedeine, who said, "That one might in them, even at " ninety, read the whole history of her life." What effects then must they have been capable of producing, when informed with all the fire and spirit of youth! when accompanied with a lively and smooth complexion, a person of dignity and ease, with a grace in all her movements, particularly in dancing, which no woman ever equalled!

One may well conclude, that all these beauties, animated with a mind and soul like hers, must have been perfectly capable of engaging all hearts. In fine, one cannot too often repeat what has been so many times said of her before, "That she had joined all the virtues of " our sex to the charms of her own; in spite " of which gender she had raised herself to the " rank of the most illustrious men *."

Toward the latter end of her life, her house was become the resort of all the worthy and polite

* Here is another impertinence thrown out by the Abbé against our sex.

polite of both sexes in the kingdom ; as also of the most learned or distinguished persons in the republic of letters. Her apartments were esteemed the center of good company ; and the most strict and virtuous parents used what address they could, when their sons began to enter into the world, to gain them the advantages of being admitted into so improving and respectable a society. But high birth or the strongest recommendations, were often vain pretensions ; for it required a great deal of real merit, besides a long sollicitation, before any one could arrive at that honour.

The Abbé Fraquiere told me a particular once, that may be mentioned very properly in this place. She had complained to him in a jesting way, of her having made one bad *purchase*, as she termed it, on the opinion of her friends ; and was most stupidly over-reached by their instances. It was with regard to Monsieur Rémonde, nicknamed the *Greek*, because he was well skilled in that language, and had built a house upon a Grecian model, that was *uninhabitable*. She used to say of him, “ I have
 “ many things to be displeased at with myself,
 “ but there is one that has mortified me more
 “ than all the rest : I have *bought* Rémonde,
 “ and find out too late, that he will never *quit*
 “ *cost*.”

He had been introduced into her society, at the reiterated request of some of his friends, who always spoke of him as an accomplished person. But, after the first imposition was over, and that she began to open her eyes upon so much boasted merit, she declared that she had been made the dupe of his *Greek erudition* ; lamented

mented the time she had thrown away in endeavouring to polish his manners; and in fine declared him banished from her *porch*, because all his sense and philosophy appeared to be *left-banded* *."

Thus far the Abbé Chateauneuf; to which I shall add an extract from the Abbé de la Fare, and then conclude.

"I did not know Madame de l'Enclos, says he, in the prime of her *first* beauty; but at fifty years of age, nay after seventy, she had lovers fond of her to adoration; and persons of the first quality in France were her most affectionate friends. For my own part, I do affirm, that I never knew any woman in my life so perfectly worthy of esteem, nor whose loss has been so deservedly lamented.

She assembled about her, people of the best sense and talents, who were collected together by the charms of her conversation, and politeness of her manners; and her house, even in the last stage of her life, was perhaps, the only one in Paris, where persons might enjoy a liberal converse of wit and letters, and where one could pass away whole winter evenings, without weariness, scandal, or play.

At the age of ninety, her company was still sought after by the youngest persons of gayety, taste and sentiment: for to a soul naturally formed for agreeableness, and which had never sacrificed but to *the* *graces*, she had joined a most
admirable

* I have read Plato in *English*; and there is a passage quoted from Homer, out of one of his works that is lost, pretty much the same with this sarcasm of Ninon's. It is thus translated in prose; *He knew many things, but knew them all amiss.*

admirable judgment, inspirited by the most lively imagination; and to an extreme age preserved such an air of youth and beauty, that the Abbé Chaulieu used to say, *Cupid had retreated even into the wrinkles of her forehead.*

When she found herself drawing near her end, she frequented her parish-church as often as her health would permit, as indeed she used to do, all her life: she made a *general confession*, and received the sacrament on her death-bed, with all the sentiments of an unfeigned piety. She died with all her senses perfect, and even with the same liveliness of wit, for which she was so remarkable during her whole life."

I have here, most fair Eugenia, collected for your entertainment, every thing that I could learn, either of the life or character of this most charming and extraordinary woman; which I have copied from the anecdotes supplied to me by Monsieur de Fontenelle, the Abbé Fraquiere, Abbé Gedoine, Chateaneuf, La Fare, &c. who were her intimate friends.

I give you my memoirs, and my authorities, and am, Madam, with admiration and respect,

Yours, &c.



T H E
T R A N S L A T O R

To the R E A D E R.

I HAVE given you here the Memoirs and Character of Madame de l'Enclos, as well as I could pick them up, out of the several detached pieces which are collected in the *Petit Reservoir*: I had a good deal of difficulty to frame a consistent story and description of her from the various accounts of different writers: I have laboured to reconcile several contradictions, have left out some passages which repeated the same things in other words; and have neglected other particulars, that would neither have enlarged her Memoirs, nor have entertained the reader.

The method I made use of was this: I read over all the papers which any way related to this extraordinary woman; and when I had made myself perfectly *mistress* of the subject, I digested the whole of her life and character into as regular and consistent a series as I was able.

Upon

Upon the whole, I may be said, rather to have re-written her history, than to have translated the *Petit Reservoir*.

Now, with regard to the freedom and libertinism of her principles, we are not to judge too strictly about the morals of a French lady, upon the point of galantry; when it has so long since become, by the corruption of manners, a part of polite breeding among them, as the playing of cards is with us.

I do not suppose that the education of French women is formed upon this plan with a view toward their following a licentious course of life; but only as men of fortune breed their sons to the law, meerly to put them on their guard against the chicanry of the law itself.

However, this knowledge sometimes prompts women to adventure too hazardous a commerce with the other sex; and the admission of galantry, though with the saving of one point, may leave perhaps, too much temptation in the way of human frailty. Add to this, that the free manners in general of the polite part of the French nation, serve to screen a woman there from the imputation of circumstances leading to the very door of truth, which the slightest indiscretion would load the chastest woman among us with.

They are therefore, less defended by *out-works*; and the indulgences, absolutions, and redeemable penances of their *commode* religion too, may be here taken into consideration, and opposed to the strict purity, and rational tenets of protestantism. But, this is no place to enter into a disquisition of divinity.

In fine, I do not think that the polite accomplishments and dangerous latitudes of a southern education,

education, are perfectly compatible with true chastity or virtue. But then, it may seem as unfair to censure a French lady of fashion for her galantry, as it would be to condemn the fair Georgians for supplying the seraglios, when each is but part of the civil commerce of their respective nations *.

The only security in such desperate cases, seems to be the virtuous and happy state of matrimony, contracted upon a perfect union of free choice and chaste affection: but, alas! the early libertinism of men, which render them dissolute of manners, and inconstant of affections, too frequently dissolves this charming connection, and sets them loose again, to be hurried down the foul current, and guided by the tainted gales of a corrupt and vitiated age.

I have made these general reflections, not in strictness as a *justification*, but in some sort as an *apology*, for the libertine life of our frail heroine. Perhaps, had she been educated in our manners and religion, she might have left a more consistent character behind her; and not have been recorded both as an honour and disgrace to our poor helpless sex.

In the same *Petit Reservoir*, I met also with a dialogue, supposed to have been held between Madame de l'Enclos and Madame de Maintenon, after she was in effect, and I believe in reality, Queen of France. It is written in the allowed characters of them both---In the free philosophic spirit of one, and the repining uneasy

* Georgia and Circassia are provinces of Asia, remarkable for the beauty of their women. The eastern seraglios are generally supplied from thence; and on this account, inoculation was first introduced there, in order to preserve or insure the features and complexion of the sultanas.

easy manner of the other*. And as I imagine it will entertain my English reader, I shall supply him with a translation of it here †

*A Dialogue between Madame de MAINTENON
and Madame de L'ENCLOS.*

MAINTENON.

My dear Ninon! I have invited you to pay me a visit in private: you may perhaps, imagine that it is with a design of dazzling your eyes with my splendor. Far from it.—It is rather to receive consolation from you.

L'ENCLOS.

Consolation, Madam! you astonish me. I protest that, not having had the honour of much intercourse with you since your arrival at such supreme grandeur, I really took it for granted, that you were completely happy.

MAINTENON.

You are of the general opinion: there are a sort of people who would rest satisfied at that point. My soul is of a different cast. In short, I have never ceased to regret your company, since we parted last.

L'ENCLOS.

I apprehend it. You feel, amidst all your glory, a want of friendship: while I, who live only for that social pleasure, feel no passion of ambition. But prithee, why have you forgot me so long?

MAIN-

* See her Life in the *The Age of Lewis XIV.* by Voltaire.

† This piece is attributed to Voltaire, by the editor of the *Revue*.

MAINTENON.

Perhaps my situation required it. But, believe me, that among the difficulties which my elevation has subjected me to, I have always looked upon this misfortune, as the highest.

L'ENCLOS.

For my part, I have neither forgot my former pleasures, nor my old friends. But, if you are really as unhappy as you affirm, you have cheated the whole world of their envy.

MAINTENON.

I was deceived myself, the first. When we used formerly to sup together, at your little house in Parliament-street, with De Villarceaux and Nanbouillet, when the lowness of my fortunes was a subject of melancholic reflection; if any one had prophesied to me, "You shall one day ascend a throne; the greatest monarch of the world shall place his chief confidence in your counsels; all his favours shall pass through your hands; you shall be honoured like a queen:" if, I say, such predictions had been made to me then, I should have cried aloud, *Their accomplishment would overwhelm me with surprize and joy!* All this has already come to pass. — I was sensible of the surprize at first—But have ever since, expected the joy—in vain!

L'ENCLOS.

Philosophers perhaps, may give you credit for all this: but the world will hardly be brought to believe that you are unhappy; or should they be ever convinced of it, they would certainly lay the whole blame upon yourself.

MAINTENON.

Why should they not be deceived, as well as I? Every one is placed as chance directs, in different

ferent degrees of life; and all the subordinate ones imagine the highest felicity to be the portion of the highest rank. What an error!

L'ENCLOS.

I agree with you: but this error is necessary to the world. Men would not be at the trouble and hazard of raising themselves above the common level, if they did not most stupidly conclude that superior happiness was the lot of superior stations. You and I have both of us experienced pleasures, more free from illusion. But pray now tell me how it comes to pass that your condition of life should happen to render you so miserable?

MAINTENON.

Ah, my dear *Ninon*! ever since I was obliged to drop the freedom of *that appellation*, for the formal address of *Madame de l'Enclos*, I ceased to be happy: my station required me to assume a reserve; this is sufficient: my heart became a void; my mind was under constraint; I act indeed the first personage of France, but 'tis merely a *personated* character. I live a borrowed life! Oh! if you knew the task imposed upon a languid soul to strive to animate another soul,---to amuse a mind no longer capable of amusement!

L'ENCLOS.

I comprehend the whole mystery of your situation. I am afraid of insulting you by this reflection, that *Ninon* is infinitely happier in her little house at Paris, with the Abbé Chateaufneuf and some other familiar friends of no great rank in life, than you are at Versailles, in the company of the greatest monarch in Europe, who renders his whole court your vassals.

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fals. I am loth to boast the superiority of my condition: I know that one should not appear too much elated before the unfortunate. Endeavour, most illustrious princefs, to *support your grandeur*, with patience and resignation: try to forget the happy obscurity that formerly we both rejoiced in, as well as you have been obliged to forget your former friends. All that is left for you in your present state, is to cry out continually, "Past pleasures that must never take their turn again! Tormenting thought! Oh why, in losing these did I not lose the remembrance of them also!" Drink of the river Lethe, Madam, and console yourself, if possible, by reflecting upon so many Queens who have so oft lamented their pompous, but forlorn state!

MAINTENON.

Ah, Ninon, what a wretched comfort is this! But I have a proposal to make you. And yet, I dare not.

L'ENCLOS.

'Tis for you to be afraid. But speak freely--out with it.

MAINTENON.

'Tis to barter your philosophy for my state, to raise you to an higher rank, and keep you to live with me always at Versailles. You will then be my friend, more than ever, by assisting me to support my present condition.

L'ENCLOS.

I always loved you, Madam, but must confess that I love myself somewhat better. There is no reason that I should turn hypocrite or become miserable, meerly because fortune has rendered you so.

MAIN-

MAINTENON.

Ah, cruel Ninon! you have a heart more callous and selfish than they have even at court. You abandon me without remorse.

L'ENCLOS.

No---my character is sensibility: you make me relent; and to prove that I retain my former friendship for you, I shall make you a proposal in turn. Quit Versailles, and come live with me, in Parliament-street.

MAINTENON.

You wound me to the heart. I cannot be happy on a throne.---Nor can I be so in retiring from it. Behold the fatal effects of a court!

L'ENCLOS.

I pretend to no medicine for an incurable distemper. I shall consult the philosophers of my acquaintance, upon the state of your case: but I cannot promise you that they will be able to work miracles in your favour.

MAINTENON.

To be placed on the very summit of grandeur,---to be worshipped, to be envied, and yet to be the subject of compassion!

L'ENCLOS.

Attend a little. Perhaps there may be something here, not rightly understood. You imagine that it is your situation in life which renders you unhappy. May not your real misfortune proceed rather, from your not having such brilliant eyes, so good an appetite, or such lively sensations, as formerly? To lose one's youth, beauty, and affections, is a truly wretched state, indeed! From this cause alone, I have known a great number of women turn devotées at fifty, and relieve themselves from one weariness, by flying to another.

MAIN-

MAINTENON.

But, you are much older than I am, and yet are neither unhappy, nor a devotée.

L'ENCLOS.

Let us discuss this point a little. We cannot at our time of life, expect compleat felicity. One must have a soul capable of lively impressions, and five senses in perfection, to rejoice in such a triumphant state as that; but, by the helps of friends, liberty, and philosophy, one may be sufficiently happy for our stage of life. The soul is never uneasy, but when moved out of its proper sphere. Take my word and experience for it, and fly to the shelter of my porch.

MAINTENON.

Behold two ministers of state, coming to interrupt us. This is a scene very different from philosophy. Farewel then, my dear Ninon!

L'ENCLOS.

Adieu, most august unfortunate!

A short time after I had met with these anecdotes of the life and manners of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, an extraordinary chance threw the following series of letters in my way; and having thus fortuitously collected so many particulars relating to so extraordinary a person, I was tempted to amuse the public, by giving them all together, under one view.

When I read these letters in the original, I confess I was most highly entertained with the ease of her stile, the spirit of her writings, and uncommonness of her sentiments; and if the English reader finds himself disappointed in any of these expectations, he must be either void of all taste himself, or lay the fault upon the translator.

We

We are to suppose that they were not designed for the press, by a letter the transcriber writes when he sends the manuscript copy to Madame de * * * *, of which the following is an extract; having left out some particulars that I have already given in her life.

M A D A M E,

I send you the letters of the late Madame de l'Enclos to the Marquis de Sevigné, and though I pay an intire obeisance to all your commands, I shall not deny that it is with reluctance I now venture to commit this collection into your hands.

If you consider, that these are the only remains * of a woman as remarkable for the superiority of her understanding, as for the charms of her person, you may well imagine how much the good fortune of being the sole proprietor of these curious manuscripts, must raise the value of them in my estimation. Therefore, I shall reckon considerably, on the acknowledgments that such a confidence has a right to claim from you.

I have only to add, that I hope the reading of these letters will not, in any sort, lessen the high opinion you have conceived of them, and which the Abbé Chateaufort has raised in us by his Treatise on the Music of the Antients; where he takes occasion to draw the character of Madame de l'Enclos, under the title of *Leontium* †; and among several eulogies he has given her, particularly speaks of her talent for epistolary writing.

After

* I suppose that this letter was writ soon after her death, and before the works of St. Evremond had been published.

† See before for this character in her *Life*.

After having censured the affectation of Balzac and Voiture's styles, "The Epistles of Leontium" says he, have always equally pleased, because "they are really letters. Though the turn of "them is singular, that they are full of reflection, and contain a great many lively passages "of wit; they have no laboured points, or "constrained thoughts in them. As the reflections are always seasoned with spirit, and the "wit never shews itself but under the appearance of a free and natural imagination, they "differ very little from private conversation; "and it may easily be perceived, that while she "was writing to her friends, she only thought "she was speaking to them."

You have now, Madam, the opportunity of judging for yourself, whether these writings have deserved the character here given of them, or that the encomium proceeded from the partiality of a friend.

The only injunction that I shall pretend to lay you under, is to remember the promise you have given me, not to communicate the copy that I here intrust you with, to any person whatsoever: for many people who might read them, may not perhaps grant all that indulgence to the incorrectness of a female writer, which she has a just claim to.

Besides, what kind of entertainment could this choice collection afford to such an age as the present? There are neither scandal, obscenity, nor irreligion, in any part of this work; and it is found by shameful experience, that none but writings of those tendencies can engage the generality of readers, in these times.

Madame de l'Enclos writ upon the heart, on love, and women. Engaging subjects! and who
could

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could better acquit themselves upon such topics? With that sensible philosophic turn of mind, she could not be acquainted with human nature without studying and investigating it. You know as well as I, that none but the most polite persons of the court were admitted into her society; that men of the greatest talents sought her friendship and converse; nay, were not ashamed even to take assistance from her opinions and advice.

In a word, all who have spoken of her agree, that her understanding comprehended as many solid as agreeable qualities, and that she was a most charming philosopher, who had cloathed the best masculine sense in all the graces of the most feminine manners.

I have the honour to be,

MADAM, &c.

As the following Collection of Letters are intirely upon the subject of galantry, it may, perhaps, be expected that I shall continue the apology which I entered into just now, on my presenting the English reader with the life and character of our fair libertine; and that before I proceed any farther, I shall defend myself for giving the public a translation of her sentiments and philosophy upon so dangerous a topic. The few words then, that I shall offer on this head, are to be understood chiefly as a justification for myself; but by no means designed to excuse the libertinism of those principles, from whence the maxims in the original writings are deduced.

It is to be observed here, that the business of galantry, by the address of corrupt manners,

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has

has at length become a *science* among those, who by a latitude of expression as well as morals, are stiled the *polite* part of the world. The knowledge of this mystery, while it remained one among men, was capable of affording them too many dangerous advantages. The use of artillery enabled those nations that were first in possession of it, to conquer and enslave their inexperienced neighbours: the secrets of play likewise tempted men to be sharpers, while ignorant and unsuspecting persons were cheated out of their fortunes. To make known then, the address of galantry, like publishing the art of war, or revealing the chicanery of play, must serve equally for defence, as well as attack; and may assist us to encounter our enemies upon more even and reciprocal terms.

Besides, I look upon the following series of letters to be much the same in effect, with several moral discourses which lay open the frailty of human nature, point out to us what allurements the *seducer* of mankind makes use of to betray, and what foibles are most likely to tempt us into the deceiving of ourselves. And as the *knowing ourselves* was affirmed by an oracle to be the highest wisdom, I believe that the knowledge of our weakness will be found to be our greatest strength. "So shall our strength be made perfect even in weakness."

For my part, I confess that I have a very good opinion of galantry; but without affecting the prude, 'tis a very different sort from what is described in the following letters: and I shall here take the liberty to offer my definition of it from my own sentiments, and the observations I have had some opportunities of making upon the behaviour

TO THE READER.

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haviour of a few persons of gay address and polite breeding.

Galantry then, is a *liberal art*, by no means synonymous with intrigue; to which it has no more relation, than musick, dancing, or any other accomplishment that may render persons of different sexes agreeable to each other. 'Tis a mutual warfare of coquetry, where each party endeavours to exert every qualification, merit, or faculty that may be capable of winning the favourable opinion of the other, without or good or bad design, without any particular view toward matrimony or intrigue. Like the game of chess, which is so engaging, that people are fond of playing at it without a stake, as a pleasing exercise of the mind,

“ And struggle for a conquest, not a prize.”

It is certain, that a commerce of this kind, between the sexes, serves to polish and improve them both; enlivens the sluggishness of mortal matter; creates attention and complacency, which are the characteristics of good-breeding; elicits every spark of genius; illumines each latent talent of the mind; weeds out the natural selfishness of the soul, and innocently and agreeably occupies that hazardous interval of life, which lies between what is stiled our entrance into the world, and our settling in it.

This space is generally employed by men, in sports of the field, and midnight carousals, which give a meanness to their sentiments, and a rudeness to their manners, that are as inconsistent with morals, as they are with politeness. A general commerce among women, enlivened with some particular attachment, has been always thought necessary to soften the uncouthness of man's nature. But then, an intire good-breeding and

perfect purity, must be preserved throughout. This sort of galantry causes a man to exert every virtue, excellence or perfection, that either his nature or education may have given him the advantages of; and diffuses over his whole manners, mien, and deportment, a certain polite and liberal air, that distinguishes the gentleman from the mechanic.

Most part of what I have here urged, may be applied likewise to women; who have besides, this peculiar advantage from the use of galantry, as I have here limited the expression, that it may serve to give them a management of their wit and beauty, which may help to defend them when they shall be more seriously attacked.

The most innocent amusements, from perversion or excess, may terminate in vice, and galantry may end in intrigue: but then, this event arises from the frailty of human nature, and might, and has happened, in more frequent instances, where there has not been any such thing as the galantry I have been describing, practised. The highest accomplishments may sometimes turn to our disadvantage; but then, a polite education is no more answerable for this, than my scheme, as far as I have carried it in this definition, is for the other.

There is a certain complacency in well-bred minds, which is much enlivened by a social intercourse of the sexes; from the consideration on one hand, of that protection and tenderness which women are in a state to claim; and the respect and deference on the other hand, which are due to men. From such reciprocal obligation, I believe that polite men may often exert galantry toward women, without the least thought

thought of them either as mistresses or wives; and women generally receive and return such addresses, with at least as innocent designs.

Such was the galantry between Monsieur de St. Evremond and Madame de l'Enclos. He had never been one of her *lovers*, though always the highest of her *admirers*: at least, the polite and fond regard they paid to each other, as may be seen in the preceding letters, when he was ninety, and the fourscore, and in different kingdoms at the same time, can never be attributed to an affection less pure than what I have been describing. The charms of so flattering and platonic a commerce, like the beauties of antient writings, must be referred intirely to taste; for the pleasures of both, arise from certain inexpressible graces, which refined sentiment or accomplished education only, can render us sensible of.

The classical taste just now alluded to, I have taken upon trust, from scholars, as I must confess myself to be wholly illiterate in all the dead languages. But this hint has happened luckily to occur to me in this place, as it may not improperly introduce a few words I have to say upon translation in general, before I conclude.

I had often heard men of letters speak most highly of the *peculiar* beauties of antient literature, preferring it beyond measure, to the best modern compositions. This raised a vast curiosity in me to pry into such hidden treasure; I regretted my want of opportunities toward being instructed in the *Belles-Lettres*, and lamented my sex more sincerely upon this occasion, than ever I did upon any other, in my life; for as to the rest, I have always comforted myself with
this

this happy reflection, that tho' we have less liberty, we have less *libertinism*.

I happened one evening to meet with some translations of these immortal names, at a friend's house; I borrowed them with great earnestness, and retired home with the utmost impatience to peruse them. I read one, for about an hour, and grew tired; I took up a second, and yawned; but upon trying the third—I fell asleep.—I found myself disappointed; I thought all the writings flat, insipid; and on comparing them in my mind, with some of the same kinds, among our own compositions, I never once hesitated to decree the bays in favour of the moderns; and fairly concluded, that all this partiality toward the antients, was in some, but a pedantic caprice, and in others, only an early prejudice for the studies of their youth, strengthened by a particular fondness most people are affected with toward those things which have cost them the greatest difficulty and labour.

I continued in this error a considerable time, 'till I happened to become acquainted with a gentleman of taste, letters and sentiment, to whom I mentioned my opinion in this matter, one day that the conversation chanced to roll upon this topic. He smiled at my mistake, and told me that my disappointment must have been owing to the translations: yet, might not be imputed so much to the inability of translators, as to the insufficiency of translation itself. He then proceeded in a short essay on the subject, that gave me perfect satisfaction in this point, and pleased me so well, that I begged he would give me the criticism in writing; which he

he did, and with which I shall here present the reader.

An ESSAY on CLASSIC TRANSLATION.

“ The reason why translations are so rarely found worth reading, is that those who are capable of doing justice to a work of this kind, would not condescend to so servile an office. Men of genius scorn to turn interpreters.

“ Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate,

“ That few, but those who cannot write, translate *.

The class of translators are generally country schoolmasters, who having more industry than genius, write more for bread than fame; and never attempt any thing farther than to present you with *their meaning* of the original. They give you literal wit without point, and grammatical sense without spirit.

A translation, not to fall short, should rise upon the original; for wit, like meat, always requires some seasoning, upon a second dressing. †

A good translation is the *picture*, a bad one the *corpse* of an author. The form, features and substance may remain; but the colour, warmth and softness are lost.

* Denham.

† Long after these notes were written, *Butler's Remains* were published; and in his chapter on translators, he has hit upon the same allusion. “ His labours are like dishes of meat twice drest, that become insipid, and lose the pleasant taste they had at first.” Upon reading the *Remains*, I have recollected many passages in Pope, Swift, &c. that would have been deemed plagiaries, if these writings had been published before theirs. This proves the homely saying, that *Good wits jump*.

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I have seen this expression, in many title pages, *faithfully* translated from the original Greek, or Latin. These are the transposers that Horace ridicules under the character of *Fidus interpres*; or literal translators.

When I first read Xenophon's Banquet, in English, I imagined to myself that a select company of antient wits had supped together; and that the *Helot** who attended during the entertainment, had taken upon him to write down the conversation when he had retired into the pantry. This image may afford one a just idea of most translations I have seen. Dunster's Horace, Clarke's Sallust, Patrick's Terence, Adams's Sophocles, *any body's* Eripides, cum multis.

In truth, even the best translations may be well compared to the wrong side of tapestry; which gives us only a rough draught of the design, but conceals the whole beauty of the performance.

And indeed, where the merits of a writer consist, as in most of the classics they do, in richness of language, politeness of expression, purity of diction, or conciseness of sentence, no translation can adequately convey the beauties of the original to you.

The copiousness of the dead languages often enabled the antients to express a thought by a single word, that the moderns are obliged to render by a sentence. We catch the original by intuition. *Vox non ex ore, sed ex pectore emissæ.* The translation tires you with periphrasis. *Longa est ambages.*

A true taste for classic writings, must be acquired

* The Helots were a conquered nation, from whence the Grecians took their slaves, as we do our lacqueys, valet de chambre's, and cooks, from France.

quired from an immediate study of themselves, in their original languages. Their spirit and flavour, like the sweets of flowers, evaporate in the *extract*.

So chemists boast they have a power,
From the dead ashes of a flower,
Some faint resemblance to produce ;
But not the virtue, taste, or juice *

SWIFT.

This taste too, must be early formed in our minds, before the palate has been vitiated by the poignant relish of modern wit. And even some of the *post-antients*, succeeding the Augustan period, should be carefully guarded against ; as also the *faux-brilliant*s of Ovid, pointed out to the student.

In fine, the charms of classic writings are not to be conveyed to us thro' the medium of modern erudition ; but resemble a sixth sense, which none of the other faculties can help us to the least conception of.

The only way of coming any thing near them, must be by *imitation* ; and yet most of the attempts that I have seen this way, appear to me but *mimickry*."

What this gentleman has said above, with regard to the difficulty of doing justice to the inimitable beauties of the classics, may be some sort of apology for the many wretched translations that have been made of them ; but this can be no manner of excuse for the miserable ones which so much abound, out of one modern language into another. Those that I could tolerably judge of, were from French into Eng-

* See Boyle. Chapter of strange reports. Article 1.
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lish; and I do declare that it is a perfect affront on the public, to have such mean and ignorant performances imposed upon them, by the influence of editors.

As my friend above, says, that the classic translations are generally done by country school-masters, I am apt to believe that all these have been made by ushers of boarding-schools; by the sole helps of grammar and dictionary, without the least acquaintance with the idiom of the language, or any manner of capacity for the spirit of the writer.

After I had proceeded about half way through the following letters, I was presented with a translation of them, which before I had read it, gave me a good deal of mortification, to imagine that I had thrown away so much needless trouble about them. But the perusal soon quickened my spirit for finishing the remainder. I shall here present you with some specimens of this curious piece, in order to give you a true notion of most modern versions.

In the first letter of the original, and second paragraph, after saying how capricious a thing the heart is, Ninon adds, *Où croit le saisir, & l'on embrasse qu'une ombre*. Here the usher takes his dictionary, and finding *ombre* to give *shadow*, in English, writes it down literally so. "You think you seize the *object*, but embrace only a *shadow*."—How tediously, how flatly expressed! When I came to this passage, I was struck with an image, and not being *dictionary-bound*, I rendered *ombre* a *cloud*. "We think to grasp it, but embrace a *cloud*;" alluding to the fable of Juno and Ixion.

This allusion enlivens the passage, and adds a spirit to the expression. But perhaps the usher might

might have been struck with an imagery himself, at this paragraph; as the dog and bone of Æsop; which however, would have been a very mean one here: yet even so, he should have written *substance* instead of *object*; for otherwise, the contrast is not sufficiently marked—as *shadow* is itself an *object*, though not a *substance*.

In the third paragraph of the same letter, l'Enclos, speaking of the danger of even a friendly intimacy between the sexes, adds, *L'amour est si malin!* Now for *malin*. My *usber* sticks the pen behind his ear, spits on his thumb, and rustles through the leaves, in quest of *malin*. Well, what says old Boyer upon the article *malin*? “Why he renders it *malignant*. But “this is too near the French, and might look “too much like a learner's task—*Spiteful* is “the same sense. Pen me down *spiteful*.” —*Write me down an ass* *. *L'amour est si malin!* Love is so spiteful—Was ever such stuff as this! Love is neither *spiteful*, nor *malignant*, let Boyer say what he will.—But Cupid is a fly archer, who frequently lies on the lurch, and lets fly at us often, when we imagine ourselves quite out of his reach. This was the idea that occurred to me, upon meeting *malin* joined with *l'amour*; and this must have been the meaning of the writer. I have accordingly, given it this turn, and as before, added likewise, an image to the passage. *L'amour est si malin!* Cupid is so fly an urchin!

Again, in the last line of letter IV. Ninon advises the Marquis, while meerly in pursuit of pleasure, never to engage in an amour with a woman of sense and merit, for that such an

affair

* Shakespear's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

affair would not long continue a frolic of gallantry; and concludes, *Vous serez à votre ménage*; which my *usher* has rendered, "This would be a marriage," and literally speaking, it is so; but as *menage* is a comprehensive term, and takes in the whole of domestic œconomy, I have used the liberty of expressing the passage thus: "You may as well be married and settled in the country *."

In short, I have translated *Ninon* by *Ninon*; by the spirit of her own writings, with the contexts of her life and character; leaving the pedantry of Boyer, to *Mes-Demoiselles* and their *ushers*.

I shall not trouble you with any more specimens of this poor *school-boy's exercise*; for I believe you have already seen enough to agree with me, that this is rather to *traduce*, than to *translate* an author. So I shall here take my leave of the *courteous reader*, but must first intreat the favour of his *courtesy*, to believe that this publication was owing intirely to the *importunities of friends*—*imperfect copies having stolen abroad*, and such other *quarter-begging apologies* as are pleaded in most of the modern prefaces.

Adieu.

N. B. It may be observed throughout this work, that I have chosen to spell the word *gallantry*, with a single *l*; but I have done so to distinguish the character of a lover from that of a soldier—*galantry* in love, from *gallantry* in war. I confess that I am not supported in this criticism, from either of the languages; for in English, the word in either sense, is spelled with

two

* I wish he was married and settled in the country, was Rochester's curse to any man that vexed him.

two l's; and in French, it has but one. But, I thought this orthography necessary to take away the equivocation, and to give the word a precision, which it needed before.

The Argument of the following LETTERS.

As the following series of letters is, if I may use such an expression, a *single-banded* correspondence, from *Madame de l'Enclos* to the *Marquis de Sevigné*; his letters being only implied, or alluded to in her answers; it may afford some assistance to the reader, toward a quicker conception of the scope, spirit, and design of these writings, to frame a sort of *Novel*, by way of *Argument*, from the whole; referring the several parts of it, to the several letters, from whence they are deduced. This I shall attempt to do in the following pages, which may serve also for the amusement, as well as the information of my readers.

The *Marquis de Sevigné*, a young man of family and fortune, having finished his studies and exercises, been nominated to a post in the army, and just entering, as the phrase is, *into life*; complained one day, to *Madame de l'Enclos*, who was one of his friends, that he had found himself disappointed on his first setting out, with sanguine hopes and palled fruitions; that dress, equipage, sports, camps, courts, &c. had failed his expectations, and afforded him but slight and transient pleasures. Eager in pursuit, and lukewarm in possession, he expressed some apprehensions, that his mind might not be in a sound and natural state; for that his affections and desires were but a sort of *sickly appetites*.

appetites, made up of *cravings* and *disgusts*. He made her some compliments upon her sense, knowledge and philosophy, desired her opinion upon his situation, and intreats her friendly counsels, to instruct him what scheme of life he should engage in, in order to obtain a more lively relish for pleasure.

Madame de l'Enclos told him that the dissatisfaction of his mind, was owing to his heart having never yet experienced the solitudes of love: that without some particular attachment, some principal object, to which our thoughts, words, and actions, are ultimately to be referred, our lives would pass like dreams away, in vain pursuits, and illusive grasps.

The Marquis, struck with the subject, and charmed with the spirit of Ninon's reflections, begged she would suffer him to enter into a correspondence with her upon this topic, which she permitted; and accordingly, the next day, he wrote her a letter, wherein he places himself under her tutelage, praying her to supply him with a *chart* of life, to steer his future course by.

Her first letter is an answer to this: in which she declines the guardianship he tenders her, but offers to become his confident, to receive advices, from time to time, of the situation of his mind and affections, and to lend him the *clue* of her experience and counsels, to conduct him through the labyrinth of the human heart, both male and female.

In answer to this, the Marquis repeats what he had before mentioned to her, with regard to the disappointment of his *hopes*, even in the fruition of his *wishes*; and her second letter gives him the philosophy of this matter; as before

fore hinted in their conversation upon this subject: the rest of her letters, and so on to the seventh, inclusive, sufficiently explain themselves; nor is there any extract from them necessary to frame our novel.

The Marquis, in pursuit of a proper object to fix his affections upon, falls in love with the Countess de —, an agreeable young widow. The progress and conduct of which passion, are the stated subjects from the eighth, to the thirtieth letter, inclusive, interspersed with variety of episodes, and philosophic sentiments; about which time, *Madame de l'Enclos* becomes acquainted accidentally, with the Countess; conceives an high opinion and esteem for her sense and merits, and engages in a close connection of friendship with her.

In the thirty-first letter, the Countess gives a very lively description of the method in which she had, for some time, conducted herself, in order to defend her heart from love; but confesses at length, that the merits and addresses of the Marquis, had won her affections.

Madame de l'Enclos, apprehending some danger for her new ally, from her avowed passion, and the assiduities of the Marquis; lest she might be won upon *unequal terms*, supports her virtue by her counsels, and baffles all the arts of her lover; hinting at the same time, that more honourable conditions would be willingly accepted of. These particulars form the subject of the thirty-second, to the forty-eighth letter, inclusive.

The Marquis, in despair of winning the Countess, upon his own terms, quits the pursuit, and engages in a libertine course of life. *Madame de l'Enclos*, finding it impossible to
withhold

88 THE TRANSLATOR, &c.

withhold him, for the present, seems to enter into his schemes of pleasures, with the design of preserving her sway over him, in hope of reclaiming him again, in favour of her fair friend. In order to which, she endeavours to give him an unfavourable impression of the *Financiere*, his first amour, and recommends inconstancy in his galantries, by way of preventing any particular attachment to detain him too long from the chaste and rational scheme of happiness she had in view for him. This is the scope of letter forty-nine, and so *en suite*, to the fifty-third, inclusive.

At length, she communicates to him a letter she had received from the Countess, where she declares, in disgust at his behaviour, her resolution of quitting the world, and retiring to pass the remainder of her life at her own estate, in the country. This revived his former passion, and awakened sentiment; he had become tired and ashamed of the profligate dissipation in which he had lately squandered away his time, and character; throws himself at her feet, she relents, they are happy; and so conclude the series, and the novel.



THE



T H E
L E T T E R S
O F
Mademoiselle Ninon de l'Enclos
T O T H E
Marquis de Sevigné.



L E T T E R I.





 OW Marquis! Charge me with




 the care of your education! To




 H guide you in the course you are now




 to steer! This is really, expecting
 too much from my friendship for you. You
 know that when a woman who has passed her
 prime, is observed to pay any particular attention
 toward a young man, they immediately cry,
She means to enter him into life; and you are not
 ignorant of the malicious insinuation with which
 they throw out such kind of expressions.

I will not therefore, expose myself to the hazard of such ridicule. All that I can do for,

your

your service, is to become your confident: you shall communicate to me every situation of your mind; on each occasion I will freely give you my sentiments, and shall endeavour to assist you in becoming acquainted with your own heart, as well as that of woman.

Notwithstanding the amusement which I promise myself in this correspondence, I shall not dissemble the difficulties I apprehend in my enterprize. This same heart, which is to be the subject of my lectures, is such a composition of contrasts, that whoever attempts to treat of it must unavoidably appear to fall into contradictions. We think to grasp it, but *embrace a cloud*. A very camelion! viewed in different lights, it exhibits opposite colours; which nevertheless, exist together in the same subject.

You must then, prepare yourself to hear many singularities, upon which I shall offer you my own conclusions; and if they should happen to appear to you rather new than just, you are at liberty to rate them accordingly.

I have besides, a delicate scruple about this undertaking; for I foresee that I can hardly be sincere, without detracting a little from the *romance* of my sex. But, you would know what are my opinions about love, and all that relates to it; and I shall muster up resolution enough to deliver you my thoughts ingenuously, upon this subject.

I am to spend this evening at Monsieur de la Rochefaucault's, with La Fontaine and Madame de la Sabliere. If you will be of our party, Fontaine shall entertain you with two new fables, which they say do by no means fall off
from

from the spirit of his former compositions in that way. Prithce meet us, Marquis. But hold—Have I nothing to apprehend from the commerce we are entering into? Cupid is so sly an urchin! Let me examine my heart—All safe—'Tis otherwise engaged; and the sentiments it is affected with toward you, are more a-kin to friendship, than to love. But at the worst, if any such caprice should hereafter happen to seize me, we must endeavour to retrieve ourselves from so unlucky an adventure, with the best address we can.

We are going then to enter into a course of morality—Yes, Marquis, of morality. But that this expression may not too much alarm you, we shall engage in no other branch of it but love alone; and this is known to have too great an influence on the manners of mankind, not to deserve a particular study.

This scheme of ours diverts me vastly. But shall I not mortify you sometimes? This is another of my fears: for you know that I am an unmerciful reasoner when I set about it. With any other kind of heart than my own, I should have made the most rigid philosopher that ever was recorded. Adieu. Let us begin whenever you please.

L E T T E R II.

YES, Marquis, I will keep my word with you; and upon all occasions shall speak the truth, though I must sometimes tell it at my own expence. I have more firmness of mind than perhaps you may imagine; and 'tis very probable, that in the course of this
cor,

correspondence, you will think I push this quality too far, even to severity. But then, please to remember that I have only the outside of a woman, and that my heart and mind are wholly masculine.

Observe the method I design to make use of in this commerce between us. As I desire nothing more than to be rightly understood, before I communicate my opinions, I shall propose them to that excellent person with whom we supped last night. 'Tis true, indeed, that he has not much prejudice in favour of poor human nature, and has as little faith in virtue, as in sprites; but then his severity, mitigated by my indulgence for human frailty, will give you, I believe, both the kind and portion of philosophy that may be necessary in a commerce with women.

Let us proceed now, to the remainder of your letter. You say that since you have entered into life, you have been continually disappointed; your enjoyments fall short of expectations; disgust and weariness pursue you every where. You fly to solitude, but grow tired when you arrive at it: you know not in short, to what can be attributed the restlessness that afflicts you.

I am going then, to put you out of pain about that point; for I have taken upon me to give you my thoughts with regard to every affection of your mind; though, perhaps, you may often start questions which may embarrass me as much as they do you.

That inquietude, that impatience, you complain of in yourself; proceeds intirely from the vacancy in your heart: It is void of love, and it was formed to receive it. You are absolutely,

lutely, as one may say, under a necessity of loving. Yes, Marquis, nature has given us all a certain *quota* of affection, which we must exercise upon some particular object. Your time of life is adapted to the emotions of love; and till your heart has experienced these fond sensations, you will ever feel there, a painful vacuity: there will be no end to that lassitude you complain of. In a word, love is the aliment of the heart, as food is of the body. To love is to fulfil the scope of nature. 'Tis the submitting to a fate.

But if possible, endeavour to avoid that kind of love which rises to a passion: to prevent this *misfortune*, I am almost tempted to second the advice that has been already given you, to prefer the company of those women who set up for nothing more than being entertaining triflers, before those dangerous charmers who are capable of inspiring as much esteem as love. At your age of life, one need not think of entering into a serious engagement: you have no occasion then, to seek for friendship in a woman; you have nothing to look for but an agreeable mistress.

The society of ladies of refined sentiment, or of those whom the ravages of time have deprived of every thing they could value themselves upon, *except their intellectual qualities*, does well enough for men, who like them are upon the decline. But for you, such women would be really *too good company*, if I may express myself thus. We have no occasion for riches, but in proportion to our wants. All you have to do at present, is to attach yourself to one, who, joined to an amiable person, has,

has a politeness in her manners, a lively disposition, a taste for social pleasures, and whom a little sympathy of affections would not much alarm.

You may urge perhaps, that in the opinion of a rational man, such women must appear too trifling: but do you think they are to be judged of with such severity? Be assured, Marquis, that if unfortunately, they should happen to acquire a more solid character, both they and you would be considerable losers by the bargain.

You require estimable qualities in women! Prithee, can't you find them in a friend? Shall I speak plainly to you? 'Tis not our sense or virtues, but our gayety and foibles, that you have occasion for. The passion you might conceive for a woman of true merit, would be dangerous to you. 'Till you have entered into the *sober* scheme of matrimony, you should seek for amusement meerly, among women: a light affection only should engage you: Beware of a serious attachment, for I prophesy that you will make but a bad end of it.

If you did not think in a much graver way than the generality of young men, I should perhaps speak to you in a different manner. But I perceive that you are ready to fall into the contrary extreme from their inconsiderateness. You should then only attach yourself to a woman, who like an amiable child, can amuse you by entertaining follies, slight caprices, and all the pretty failings that make up the pleasures of an affair of galantry.

Shall I tell you what makes love so dangerous? 'Tis the too high idea we are apt to frame of it. But, to speak the truth, love, considered

considered as a passion, is meerly a blind instinct, that we should rate accordingly: 'Tis an appetite which inclines us to one object rather than another, without our being able to account for our taste. Considered as the bond of friendship, where reason presides, it is no longer a passion, and loses the very name of love. It becomes esteem: which is indeed, a very pleasing affection, but too tranquil; and therefore, incapable of rousing you from your present supineness.

If you madly trace the footsteps of our antient heroes in romance, adopting their extravagant sentiments, you will soon experience that such false chivalry metamorphoses this charming passion into a melancholy folly, nay often a tragical one: a perfect phrenzy! But divest it of all the borrowed pomp of opinion, and you will then perceive how much it will contribute, both to your happiness and pleasure. Be assured, that if either reason or *knight errantry* should be permitted to form the union of our hearts, love would soon become either a state of apathy, or madness.

The only way to avoid these extremes, is to pursue the course I have pointed out to you. At present, you have no sort of occasion for any thing more than meer amusement; and believe me you will not meet it, except among women of the character I speak of. Your heart wants occupation; and they are framed to supply the void. At least, give my prescription a fair trial, and I will be answerable for the success.

I promised to reason with you, and I think I have kept my word. Farewel. I have just received

ceived an agreeable letter from Monsieur de St. Evremond, that I must answer immediately. I shall write him the sentiments I have mentioned to you, on this subject, and I am much deceived if he does not agree with my opinion.

To-morrow the Abbé Chateaucneuf, and perhaps Moliere, are to be with me. We are to read over the *Tartuffe* * together, in order to make some necessary alterations. Depend upon it, Marquis, that whoever denies the maxims I have here laid down to you, partakes a little of that character in his play.

Adieu.

LETTER III.

NOTWITHSTANDING all I have said, you seem to adhere to your first prejudices. You would have a mistress that you could respect and esteem, and who might at the same time, become your friend. Such sentiments are certainly very commendable, if upon trial, they could produce that happiness which one might reasonably expect from them. But experience will soon convince you that these fine expressions are but empty sounds.

For merely an amusement of the mind, must it be necessary to hunt after important qualities? The reading of romances has almost impaired your understanding! The poor Marquis! he has suffered himself to be dazzled with the sublime *theorems* which are often the subjects of conversation. But, my dear friend, to what account will all these *rational chimeras* turn? I shall freely give you my opinion of them. They
are

* The Hypocrite.

are really most beautiful *counters*; but oh the pity that they are not current!

When you design to enter upon a settled plan of life, look out for a woman of good sense, true virtue, and high principles: all these are perfectly consistent with the dignity—I had almost said the *gravity*—of a married state. But while galantry is your scheme, beware of growing serious, and give credit to what I tell you. I know what will agree with you better than you do yourself.

In general, men pretend that they covet essential qualities in love. Ignorant as they are, how much disappointed would they be, if they should meet with them! What would they gain by being edified, when it was amusement only they had occasion for? Such a rational mistress as you contend for, would be—a wife—for whom I acknowledge you might conceive an infinite deal of *respect*. But prithee, what's become of the fondness? Gone! A woman estimable in all particulars, would subject, would humble you too much, to suffer you to love her long. Compelled to esteem, even to admire her sometimes, you could not avoid ceasing to love her soon. So much excellence would be a reproach direct, a critic too severe upon your own failings, not to make your pride revolt in time: and when once that is mortified, farewell love.

Analyze your sentiments strictly, examine closely into your own heart, and you will find this maxim true. I have but a moment to bid you adieu.

L E T T E R IV.

UPON my word, Marquis, you will at last put me past my patience. Lord, how stupid you are sometimes! I have your letter before me. You do not apprehend me. Attend a little better to what I say. I did not tell you that you should chuse a fool for your mistress: nothing could be farther from my sentiments. But I said, that in reality, you had no manner of occasion for any thing more at present, than an amusing occupation of heart and mind; and that to render such an engagement agreeable, one need not insist upon very extraordinary qualities.

I repeat it again—In love, men should look for nothing farther, than amusement solely; and I believe, upon such a subject as this, that my opinion may obtain some credit. A little peculiarity of temper, a slight caprice, or a childish quarrel, have frequently greater effect on men, and attach them more strongly, than the most rational or solid characters.

A person, whom you highly esteem for the strength and justness of his sentiments*, said once before me, that “caprice was annexed to beauty, to be its counterpoison †.” I fought him
him

* La Bruyere.

† Doctor Young, in one of his satires upon women, has framed a distich upon this thought.

An antidote in female caprice lies,
Kind Heaven! against the poison of their eyes.

Univ. Pas.

him out upon his maxim, as I am fully of opinion, that *caprice was joined to beauty, to animate its charms, and to enhance their value by adding spirit and poignancy* *.

There is no sentiment more cold or of shorter continuance, than admiration. We grow insensibly indifferent to the same *set* of features, tho' ever so beautiful; and if there be not a little quickening spirit, to give them life and action, their very uniformity will soon destroy the sentiments they at first excited. A little change of temper is absolutely necessary, to give a fine woman that happy variety, which prevents our growing weary of finding her always the same. In truth, 'tis unlucky enough for a woman to have too even a disposition; the equality of her tenor permits indifference to arise—perhaps disgust. 'Tis always the same statue; and a man continues his own master—perfectly at ease before her. She is so reasonable, so gentle, that she deprives one even the liberty of squabbling with her; and that liberty is sometimes, so great a pleasure!

Place in her stead, a woman, lively, uncertain, froward—but these only to a certain

* I have met with a pretty allusion upon this subject.
 “ The caprices of beauty may be compared to shrubs
 “ that sometimes occur in laying out an improvement;
 “ which though out of rule to plant there, would be want
 “ of taste to root out.” *Series of Letters between Henry and Frances.*

I like this sentiment better than either of the others. The first says that caprice destroys love---the second, that it cherishes it. But the latter, that it is neither to be wished in or out of a pretty woman's composition. And in truth, it helps to form that kind of character, which made the poet cry out,

There is no living with thee---or without thee!

degree.—The scene is shifted: the lover meets in the same person with all the charms of variety. Caprice is the salt of galantry, that preserves it from corrupting. Inquietudes, jealousies, quarrels, piques, and reconciliations, are, if not the *diet*, at least the *exercise* of love. Inchanting variety! that fills and occupies the sensible heart more charmingly, than all the regularity of deportment, and tedious sameness of what are deemed the *better characters*.

I know how to deal with you men. A little change of temper throws you into uncertainty, and gives you as much difficulty and uneasiness to dissipate, as if it were a victory to be gained over a new mistress. A little hurry now and then, keeps you in wind: you will struggle, and also conquer and be overcome by turns. In vain poor reason sighs! you cannot conceive how such a *meteor* should lead you so implicitly about: every one tells you that the idol of your affections is a compound of vanity and caprice. —But, 'tis a spoiled child, and you cannot rid yourself of a childish fondness for it! Even those efforts that reflection may force you to make, in order to set you free, will often serve but to bind your chain the faster. For love is never so strong, as when we imagine it ready to break from the resentment of a quarrel. Its throne is tempest—and its state convulsion! Reduce it to the government of reason—it languishes! it expires!

Upon the whole, I would not advise you to chuse a mistress whose sense and merit are predominant, but one whose humour sometimes bears sway, and silences proud reason. Otherwise, be assured that it will not long continue a frolic.

frolic of galantry; and you may as well be married, and settled in the country.

These are my last words.

Adieu.

L E T T E R V.

Y E S. I agree with you, Marquis, that a woman who is only a composition of whim and caprice, would make but a disagreeable companion, and must disgust in the end. I acknowledge also, that a constant irregularity of temper would turn your amour, your metaphorical warfare, into a literal one. But then indeed, it was not to a person of such characters that I advised you to attach yourself. You always overshoot the mark.

In my last letter, I described an agreeable woman, who might be rendered still more engaging, by a little inequality of humour, with some tincture of coquetry, &c. And you seem to speak to me of an arrant shrew, that is continually untoward and perverse. What different characters are here! When I mentioned *humour*, I meant only that kind which arises from an earnestness of spirit, a certain impatience of manner, with, perhaps, a little disposition to jealousy. In a word, such a one as is born of love itself, and not the offspring of a natural perverseness, that is frequently stiled *humour*.*

When 'tis love that renders a woman unreasonable; when 'tis that alone which urges her impatience, what man can be so void of delicacy or sentiment, to complain? Do such

* In English, this point is very well distinguished, by stiling this latter character *humourisme*.

extravagances not prove the violence of the passion? For my part, I shall never be persuaded that whoever can contain themselves within very reasonable bounds, were ever much in love. Can we be really so without suffering ourselves to be hurried away by the transports of an heart-felt affection? without being sensible of all those agitations which it necessarily creates? No surely.—And who can perceive all these emotions in the beloved object, without a flattering pleasure? While they are rendered uneasy by her suspicions and resentments, they feel with a secret delight, that they are beloved—that they are loved with passion. And such capricious behaviour is so much further a convincing proof, as it is involuntary.

This, my dear Marquis, is the secret charm that pays the lovers pains and dries his tears. But, if you could imagine I should tell you that an ill-tempered, absurd termagant could supply the pleasures of love, I beg you would undeceive yourself forthwith.

I said indeed, and shall ever persist in my opinion, that there must be a little peculiarity of temper, some caprice, and a sensible emotion, in a commerce of galantry, to prevent it from growing languid, and to make it last. But it is very certain, that these seasonings will not naturally answer the end, except where they proceed from love alone.

If a particularity of *humour* arises solely from untoward nature, from a difficult, uneasy or froward disposition, I should be in haste to pronounce it, that such a perverse temper must soon render a woman hateful, and occasion the most disgusting quarrels. Such an union must become

come a real chain, from which one should endeavour to extricate themselves as quick as possible.

Adieu.

LETTER VI.

YOU think then, Sir, that you have urged one invincible argument against me, by saying that it is not in our power to bestow our affections where we please; and that consequently, you are not at liberty to chuse the object of your attachment. What a strange moral is here! Prithee leave this common place maxim to those women, who are reduced to plead it as an apology for their own weakness. They must have something foreign to lay the blame upon, in order to escape the censure themselves. Somewhat like the voluptuary that Montaigne mentions, who when pinched by the gout, used to cry out, *that cursed ham!* It was a stroke of sympathy, say they, too powerful to resist—Can we over-rule the impulses of our hearts? There is a destiny! &c.

All objections, to be sure, must be silenced, when such very notable arguments as these have been offered; and these opinions have actually gained so much credit in the world, that one must enter the lists against a multitude, who would attempt to refute them. But such maxims are so generally received, only because it is the interest of many to have them universally believed.

People are not aware, that such excuses, instead of justifying their weakness, are a professed acknowledgment that they were rather in-

clined to indulge themselves in it. For my part, I take the liberty of dissenting from the common opinion in this particular. It is sufficient to affirm, that it is not impossible, at least, to conquer our inclinations, in order to condemn those which are dishonourable or absurd.

Pray have we not known many women *over-rule the impulse of their hearts*, after they have discovered that the object of their regards has been deemed unworthy of them? How many others have stifled the most tender passion, and sacrificed it to the conveniencies of a settlement? Flight, time and absence, are remedies, to which the strongest *impulses* must, at length, submit. They grow weaker by degrees, till at last, the fond impression wears insensibly away.

I acknowledge, that to acquit ones self with success in such a difficulty, requires the full exertion of our prudence and philosophy. I imagine, however, that the improbability we are too apt to apprehend in such a conflict, may often deprive us even of the courage to attempt it: so that though I affirm there is no inclination unsurmountable in speculation, I must admit there are few that are really conquered in practice. But then, this is owing intirely, to our not adventuring to enter the lists against our passions and foibles *.

However,

* Here is an admirable lecture against the *pleaded* frailty of our natures; which proceeding from the mouth of a libertine, may probably have better effect than the strongest writings of more severe moralists. There are, interspersed through these letters, several reflections of the same kind, which may serve to strengthen the apology I have before made, for offering a translation of this work to the public.

However, to wave any further dispute upon this subject, and as our argument at present, is meerly on the topic of galantry, it would be impertinent to put you upon the struggle with any particular inclination you may conceive for a woman more or less amiable: but then, as you have not yet entered into any engagement, I only mean to point out to you the character that is most likely to answer the purpose of such an adventure.

It were *most devoutly to be wished*, that some juster sentiments, or more real merit, had a greater sway over your hearts and minds: that they were capable of filling up the *void* for the present, and also of fixing your constancy for life. But, experience has evinced, that such a hope is vain. I do not reason then, upon what ye ought to be, but what in sad truth, ye are. My design is only to give you the knowledge of your hearts, as they are in reality constituted; not such as I could wish, indeed, they were.

I am myself, the first to lament the depravity of your tastes, however indulgent I may be to the irregularity of your appetites: but not being able to reform the follies of your hearts, I would instruct you to make the best of their weaknesses. Finding it impossible to make you wise, I can only attempt to render you happy.

It is an old saying, that *to destroy the passions, would be to annihilate us*: all we can do, is to regulate them. They are in our hands, what poisons are in pharmacy; which under the management of a skilful chymist, may be wrought up into salutary medicines.

Adieu.

L E T T E R VII.

AND who doubts, Marquis, but it is real merit that renders ye agreeable to women? All I desire to know is, what idea you have affixed to that expression? Do you, by *real merit*, intend a solid understanding, nice discernment, great erudition, prudence, discretion—in short, an *heap* of extraordinary qualities, that more frequently *incumber*, than render ye happy or successful? If these be your sentiments about *merit*, we certainly can never understand each other.

Reserve such cardinal virtues for your commerce among men.—They have agreed upon the barter of such commodities. But, in gallantry, exchange these rare and superior excellencies for more common and familiar qualifications.—These are the only *specie*, that have credit in such a traffic. And be their intrinsic value never so low, they cease to be *counters*, when they have obtained a *currency*: for, true merit consists less perhaps, in real perfection, than in what the world have agreed to receive as such.

It is much more convenient to be master of qualities agreeable to those we wish to please, than to possess others that even those very persons themselves, may acknowledge to be more estimable. In a word, we must copy the manners, and imitate the foibles of those we associate with, if we would live with ease or satisfaction among them.

What is the proper destination of women? what is the *role* you allow them in your drama? is it not to sooth, to please, to charm? The advantages

vantages of person, the graces of mien, a liveliness in conversation, with a politeness of manners, are the surest qualifications for compassing these ends: women possess these accomplishments in the supreme degree; and 'tis in these they would have you likewise to excel. Call them triflers, if ye dare.—They perform the highest part who are formed and destined to render ye happy.

Is it not truly, to the charms of our converse, and complacency of our manners, that you are indebted for your sincerest pleasures, for all the social virtues; in a word, your intire well-being? Answer me, ingenuously; learning, ambition, riches, valour, even friendship itself, of which, and with reason, you so much boast; are any, or all of these together, capable of rendering you perfectly happy? Or at least, the pleasures you receive from them, are they lively enough even to make you tolerably so? Doubtless, no.—All these together joined, would not be able to rid you of that stupid sameness of life which is so apt to oppress you; and ye must have, in truth, remained the most pitiable creatures alive!

But 'tis the peculiar province of women to dissipate this mortal languor by the lively seasonings of their converse, and the charms they are capable of diffusing o'er galantry. A fond folly, a flattering hope, or an ardent wish, are the only things that can awaken your attention, and give you a true sense of happiness. For surely, Marquis, there is a vast difference between merely *possessing* our good fortune, and *relishing* the pleasures of that enjoyment.

The bare necessities of life can only make a man *easy*; 'tis superfluity that renders him *rich*; or makes him sensible he is so. 'Tis not superior

rior qualities alone, that make us amiable: 'tis perhaps a fault to be master of none but what are of real value. To be well received in the world, one must be agreeable, entertaining, serviceable to the pleasures of others. I promise you that there is no succeeding in general, but particularly with women, except by these means.

Pray tell me now, what business have we with your over-grown knowledge, the depth of your judgment, or the extent of your learning? If you possess only such advantages, if some slighter and more familiar talents do not soften and polish their uncouthness.—I have ta'en the poll—So far from pleasing, you would appear a most formidable *censor* to them; and the restraint you would lay them under, must banish from their converse all that freedom, gayety, and ease, in which they would naturally indulge themselves before persons of less account: nay, the very despair of succeeding, would hinder them even from attempting to render themselves agreeable to men of a certain coldness in their manners, who are apt to examine every thing with the calmness of philosophy, and will not permit themselves a careless freedom in conversation. The ease and chearful sweets of social intercourse, are only to be enjoyed among those who are as heedless and unguarded as ourselves, affording us the same reciprocal advantages over them.

In fine, too much circumspection has the like effect upon our minds, that a cold air has upon our bodies. Reserve shuts up the door of their hearts with whom we converse, and makes them cautious how they unfold them. You must then beware, Marquis, of striking a damp upon
galantry,

galantry, by affecting to exhibit yourself only in your most important light. You may have read, that people more often please by agreeable failings, than by the most essential qualities. Great merits are like large pieces of gold, which we make less use of than of smaller coin*.

This thought makes me recollect certain nations, who instead of sterling metals, carry on their traffic intirely with shells. Now, prithee don't you think these people are as rich as we with all the bullion of the new world? One might at first, be apt to mistake their riches for poverty, till we reflect that gold and silver receive their value from our opinion only; and that our coin, among those people, would but serve for counters.

The qualities which you deem essential, are to be rated after the same manner, in galantry: we have occasion there, only for *shells*; and what signifies the medium of traffic, while the commerce is carried on?

My conclusion then, is fairly this: If it be true, which you cannot doubt, that your chief happiness must arise from the society of women, be assured that you can never render yourself agreeable to them, but by such qualities as are analogous to their own.

I return again. You men affect to value yourselves upon your sciences, learning, judgment, &c. &c.—But tell me, ingenuously, how irksome would your lives become, if ye were condemned to be always rational, learned, solid, and to spend your time intirely among philoso-

* Swift has the same expression with regard to learned men: "Though they have quadruples in their purses, they are frequently at a loss for ready change."

philosophers? I know ye perfectly well; ye would grow very soon tired of admiring one another; and formed of such stuff, as ye are, ye would more readily resign your excellences, than your pleasures.

Therefore, prithee don't deceive yourself by endeavouring to pass for a person of importance, in the sense you mistake it. True merit is that only, which is so esteemed by those we would desire to please. Galantry has its peculiar laws, Marquis. Agreeable fellows are the only *sages* of that province.

Adieu.

L E T T E R. VIII.

I Perceive, Marquis, that you have not very far to travel. Your hour is arrived at last. The account you give of yourself, sufficiently proves you to be at length, in love; and the young widow you mention, is indeed, very capable of inspiring that passion. The Chevalier de — has given me a very advantageous description of her. But the moment you begin to be sensible of the least inquietude, you reproach me for the advice I have given you! The uneasiness that arises in our breasts, with the other evils occasioned by love, appear, you say, more to be dreaded, than all its pleasures are to be desired.

There are, 'tis true, a sober kind of people, who think the pains, at least equal to the joys. But not to enter into a tedious disquisition on this subject, let me offer you my own opinion about the matter. Love then, is a passion, or emotion of the soul, neither good nor evil in its own nature: it rests intirely upon the experience

rience of its votaries, who according as they have been differently affected, resolve it, some into an evil, and others into a good.

All that I need say in its favour, is, that it is attended with one circumstance, which all the inconveniences imputed to it, cannot be able to counterpoize. It relieves us from supineness, it quickens us, and is so far, of immediate advantage. I believe I told you before, that our hearts are formed for emotion; and whatever rouses or actuates them, may be said to answer the design of nature. Oh! what is life without the relief of love? A tedious malady! 'Tis not existence.—Vegetation only!

Love is to our minds, what winds are to the sea. They often raise storms there indeed, and sometimes occasion shipwrecks: but then, 'tis they which render it navigable: nay the very agitation they produce, is necessary to preserve its virtues*; and if they render the voyage dangerous, 'tis the pilot's business to provide against the hazard.

I return to my subject, and though your delicacy may be offended at my frankness, I shall add, that besides the necessity we labour under, of something to keep us awake, we have within us, a certain physical and necessary cause of love. Perhaps it may not be proper for a woman to speak this language to you. You know I do not speak so plainly in general; but, we are not holding a *polite conversation*—we are only

* Philosophers say, that if it was not for the fluctuation of the ocean, its salts would subside, thereby rendering the waters unfit for that peculiar species of animals which are framed to inhabit them; and would stagnate, at length, to putrefaction.

ly *philosophising*. If my propositions appear sometimes too abstruse for a woman, remember what I told you in one of my former letters*. As soon as I was capable of reason, I took upon myself to examine which of the sexes had the advantage †; and finding the distribution to lie mostly in your favour, I immediately commenced *man*.

Under this character then, I need not inquire whether it is right or wrong to admit the passion of love: we might as well enter into a disquisition about thirst; and caution all the world against drinking, because some people are apt to get drunk. Since then, it is not a matter within your own election, whether you shall have an appetite conformable to the mechanical construction

* Letter II. paragraph 1.

† *Had the advantage*. The French expression is, étoit le mieux partagé, which the former *translator* of these letters, mentioned in my preface, without the least authority from sense or dictionary, renders thus, *was the most numerous*. But, the whole passage is in the same stile and may amuse the reader. Dès que j'ai fait usage de ma raison je me suis mis en tête d'examiner lequel des deux sexes étoit le mieux partagé: j'ai vu que les hommes ne s'étoient point du tout maltraités dans la distribution des rôles, & je me suis faite *homme*. " Since the time I began to make use of my reason, I have taken it into my head to examine which of the two sexes *was the most numerous*. I have observed that yours had no reason to complain of being ill used in the distribution of the *register*, and therefore I have thought it *no injustice* to commence a *man*."

I wish heartily that there was an attorney general appointed in the republic of letters, to prosecute such notorious offenders against the state. To render them for ever incapable of holding any employ in literature; either as author, translator, or even compiler, transcriber, printer, or prompter.

struction of your natures, or no; away with romantic notions, and never perplex yourself with computations upon the more or less advantages of loving. Make use of this passion in the manner I have recommended to you.— Let it be your *amusement*—but never your *occupation*.

I expect here that you will overwhelm me again, with your high flown principles, and tell me that it is not in our power to arrest the current of our affections at whatever point we may chuse to limit them. But observe, that I consider those who talk after this manner, in the same light I do persons who think themselves obliged in honour to express an hearty affliction on account of some loss which other people perhaps, may look upon to be very considerable. They know, at the same time, that they ought rather to take consolation; but find a sort of satisfaction in their grief. They love to feel that their hearts are capable of carrying a sentiment to excess, and this reflection softens them still more. They nourish, they idolize their affliction, and render it incense from habit.

Just so your sublime lovers, with sentiments overstrained by prudery or romance, make it a point of honour with themselves, to spiritualize their passion. From the refinements of delicacy they adopt a kind of a galant superstition, to which they are more strongly devoted, as it is a religion of their own making. In fine, they become at length, ashamed of descending to common sense, and appearing rational creatures.

Prithee, Marquis, do not suffer yourself to be hurried into such ridiculous lengths as these. Such elevated notions are looked upon by the present

present age, as either foolish or affected. Formerly, they took it into their heads that love was to be a serious, a sublime passion, and esteemed only in proportion to its dignity.— Give dignity to a child, and what will become of its graces? What a ridiculous and inconsistent character would you make of it!

I have really, vast compassion for our poor unfortunate ancestors. What was with them a languishing distemper, a melancholic madness, is among us, but a gay folly, or a pleasant dream. Bewitched as they were to prefer the horror of rocks and deserts to all the beauties of a flowered parterre! What absurd prejudices has the habit of reflection thrown to the ground!

To prove that such sublime conceptions are but the chimeras of prepossession or pride, it need only be observed, that we no longer perceive any taste now amongst us, for that sort of mystic galantry, ~~now ever heard in the present~~ times, of such gigantic passions. Apply but ridicule to the best established opinions, even to those we think the most natural, and you will find that both one and the other shall often vanish away, and leave us astonished that some ideas we had idolized in our minds, should be found in truth, but empty notions, which took their turns of change, like idle fashions *.

* Shaftsbury has proposed *ridicule*, as a test of truth. Perhaps he had taken the hint from this passage, as these letters were published in his time: but, he has carried the sentiment too far. Every thing that is not capable of mathematical certainty, may be made a subject of cavil; and yet there are *truths*, which cannot be *demonstrated*. Moral philosophy all men are agreed in, yet Aristophanes, in his comedy of the *Clouds*, rendered Socrates the jest of Athens. Is every thing ridiculous that a fool laughs at?

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Therefore, good Marquis, do not alarm yourself with prophetic conjectures upon the event of your attachment to the charming Countess, and you will perceive in the end, that love in reality, such as can render us happy, instead of being considered as a very solemn affair, should be treated as no serious matter at all; and particularly, ought ever to be conducted with gayety. Nothing will prove the truth of this maxim, better than the event of your adventure; for I fancy that the Countess is a woman by no means susceptible of grave impressions, and your sublime sentiments will give her the vapours, remember I tell you.

My disorder continues still. I had a great mind to tell you that I shall not go abroad all day: but would not this be a kind of assignation? However, if you will come and give me your opinion of Racine's *Bajazet*, I shall be very well pleased with your company. They say that *La Champmelay* * has excelled herself, in that performance.

I have read my letter over, Marquis, and it puts me out of humour with you. I find gravity is infectious; and you may judge how much your mistress must have been affected with it, when you have communicated it to me, even while I was endeavouring to cure you of the distemper. There is something singular in this, that to prove love ought to be treated with cheerfulness, I should be obliged to assume a serious air.

Adieu.

L E T T E R

* A famous actress.

LETTER IX.

YOU have then taken what I said in my last letter, most heinously ill? I have profaned the divinity of love, and most impiously degraded its dignity, by reducing its empire to a vulgar appetite. As for you, Marquis, you have more elevated notions of this passion: what passes in your own breast is a proof of it. You have no sort of sensation beyond that pure and delicate affection which occupies your whole soul. *To behold the Countess, to hold tender converse with her, to listen to the soft melody of her voice, to render her little assiduities*—These, the only scope and extent of your wishes; and these alone, sufficient to constitute your supreme felicity. Far be from you those vulgar sentiments I so unworthily substitute in the place of your sublime metaphysics: thoughts only becoming of terrestrial minds, attached simply to the gross pleasures of sense! What an error must I be in! Could I imagine the Countess was a woman to be won by motives so unworthy of her? And to give the least hint of such mean sentiments in yourself, would it not be to expose you to her scorn, her hatred, &c. &c.?

My philosophy then, has given you to apprehend all these sad misfortunes—My poor Marquis! How have you deceived yourself by your ignorance of the genuine cause of your sentiments! Will you lend me your whole attention? I would rescue you from an error: but with that solemn air which is answerable to the great importance of the subject I am entering upon. I mount the tripod! I feel the presence of the deity! I am inspired! I rub my forehead,

forehead, like one who meditates deep mysteries, and am just going to pronounce oracles! Let us reason in form.

Mankind, from I know not what caprice, have affixed a certain shame to that reciprocal inclination which nature has given to the sexes. They were sensible, however, that they could not absolutely stifle its voice. What's to be done in so difficult a case? Why truly, they endeavoured to substitute the outward shew of an affection purely spiritual, to the humbling necessity of appearing honestly to satisfy an appetite. Insensibly they became accustomed to occupy themselves in a thousand *little sublime nothings*.

——But did not stop here——For at length, they began really to believe that all this *accessary* trifling, effects of an overheated imagination, constituted the intire essence of this passion. Behold now, love elevated among heroics! At least, they have lent it the appearance of one: but, let us break through the imposition, and take an example.

Two lovers, at the commencement of their amour, imagine themselves inspired with the most delicate sentiments: they exhaust all the refinements, the exaggerations and enthusiasm of the highest seraphics; and are for a time, enamoured with the idea of their own excellence. But, let us attend them thro' the whole course of their connection, and we shall soon perceive that nature will call in for its share. In a short time, their vanity, satisfied with the shew of these *alembic* notions, leaves the heart at liberty to feel and explain its real sentiments; and notwithstanding their refined contempt for the vulgar pleasures of sense, a time will come, when this pair of platronics may be much surprised to find

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find themselves, after a tedious circuit, at the same point with the most ordinary peasant, who would honestly have begun just where they left off.

Retrieve yourself then from your error: abandon your chimera: keep your refined sentiments intirely for friendship. Set no higher value upon love than it deserves. The more dignity you allow it, the more dangerous it becomes; and the more sublime your ideas of it rise, the farther they are from being just.

Take a person's word for it, who is perfectly acquainted with the human heart. "If a man thinks, says he, that he loves his mistress for her sake only, he is extremely mistaken*."

L E T T E R X.

THE discourse then, that the Countess held with you, upon the delicacy which she required in a lover, has startled you. You imagine she will always be as severe as she appears to you at present. All I have said is not sufficient to keep up your spirits. You think you do me favour in barely doubting of my maxims. If you dare speak out, you would condemn them intirely.

I believe you in earnest, when you speak after this manner. It is not your fault if you do not see clearly into the business you are about: but in proportion as you advance, the cloud will dissipate, and you will perceive with surprize the truths I had before pronounced to you.

While your passion remains temperate, at least, before it has attained to that degree of

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* Rochefortault.

confidence, to which its progress will conduct you, every thing appears serious: the hope of the least favour is a crime: one does not permit themselves the most innocent freedoms, without trembling. At first, one solicits nothing, or so small a matter, that a woman thinks in justice, she should accord it to you, in consideration of your extreme modesty: to obtain this trifle, one promises never to require more; yet, in the instant of making such protestations, they are insensibly gaining ground, and becoming more familiar: she permits this idle dalliance, as of so little consequence, that she would suffer it in almost any man of her intimate acquaintance.

But at length, what seemed to be of small import to-day, upon comparison with what passed yesterday, would appear very considerable, when compared to the liberties that were at first permitted. A woman, rendered confident by your discretion, cannot easily perceive the insensible gradation of her own weakness. She is so self-sufficient, and the slight favours solicited for the present, appear so easy to be refused, that she too hastily concludes the same strength will remain, when any thing of more consequence shall be attempted. I have not yet sufficiently expressed myself—she even flatters herself that her resistance will increase, in proportion to the importance of the favours required.

Women have often such a reliance on their virtue, that they sometimes provoke danger, by daring it: they essay their strength, and have a curiosity to try how far a few slight freedoms are able to carry them. How imprudent to accustom their minds to such ideas as are capable of
undoing,

undoing them in the end! What way do they often make, before they discover they have stirred out of the spot? And if upon reflection, they are themselves surprized at having yielded so far, the lover is sometimes, no less so, at having obtained so much.

I may carry this matter further; for I am convinced from many instances, that a woman may sometimes be overcome, even without love, or loose desire. I knew a lady once, who though perfectly amiable, had never shewn the least turn or disposition toward galantry. Fifteen years marriage had not in the least, abated her fondness for her husband, and their mutual affection was become a proverb among their acquaintance.

One evening at their country-house, some friends staid so late, that they were obliged to lye there. In the morning her maids were employed in attendance on the several ladies in their bed-chambers, and she was left alone in her dressing-room. A gentleman who was intimate in the family, and whom she had always looked upon as a person of no manner of consequence, happened to call into the room, to pay her the compliments of the morning.

He assisted her in little offices at the toilette: the deshabille in which he found her, naturally afforded him an occasion of paying some galant compliments, upon her charms remaining still unimpaired; which she passed off with a smile, as meer words of courtesy. From one gay subject to another; from beauty to love, to galantry: they toyed, they romped, they struggled: some slight attempt, at first neither premeditated on one side, nor apprehended on the other, became at last, a decisive event. She

was

was taken by surprise, before she found herself besieged.

What must then have been the astonishment of each, upon such an unforeseen adventure! they have neither of them since, been ever able to account for it, how they could have been both hurried so far, on the instant, without having had the least thought, inclination, or design toward an amour, the very moment, or indeed any moment of their lives, before.

Here we may cry out, "Vain mortals, who put such confidence in your virtue, whatever resolution ye may boast, know that there are *unlucky minutes*, when the most chaste may become most frail! The reason of which extraordinary crisis, is, that nature never sleeps, and always labours to carry its point. Appetite is part of our substance: virtue is only a piece of *inlaid-work*; which requires an equal temperature to prevent from *warping*."

The discourse that the charming Countess held with you then, might be really sincere.—Though upon such occasions, women are apt to exaggerate a little—but she deceives herself, if she imagines she will be able to persevere to the end, in such strict and *superfine* sentiments. Be assured, that such *metaphysicians* differ not in the main, from the rest of their sex. Their outward appearances are more plausible, and their moral more austere; but examine their actions, and you'll find that their engagements always conclude after the same manner as theirs who do not pretend to very elevated affections. They set up a sort of heresy for themselves,

selves, and as I said, ~~one~~ day, to the Queen of Sweden, "these are your *Janfenists* in love *."

You ought then, Marquis, to know how to rate whatever women say to you upon the subject of galantry. All these fine systems which they make so pompous a display of, are but airy phantoms they would amuse those with who are easily imposed upon. To a man of any understanding, this heap of studied phrases is a mere parade, dwhich he makes a jest of, and never hinders him from penetrating their real sentiments.

The hard things they say of love; the resistance they oppose to it; the little inclination they affect for its pleasures; the cautious measures they seem to take against the passion; the apprehensions they express about it—All these, do they not proceed from love alone? This is to render him homage after their manner: it is to be intirely occupied about him. He knows how to vary his form with them: like pride, he rises from his own defeat, and appears to be conquered, only to fix his empire more sure.

My stars! what a letter is here! But to excuse the length of it, would be to make it longer.

Adieu.

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* The Janfenists are a reformed sect in France, that sets up for purer doctrines than the rest of the Roman Catholics.

When the reader has finished the above letter, he may almost imagine I had not seen it till it presented itself in the order of this translation. For certainly, he will have good reason to say, that the inserting it in my preface, might have saved me the expence of any farther apology for publishing this collection. Could the best moralist, or severest prude, point out the folly of confidence, or the bazard of dalliance, in a stronger manner than L'Enclos has done in this writing? This is the free-st letter in the whole let; and yet, is there scarce a paragraph in it that might not supply a thesis for a boarding-school lecture?

LETTER XI.

I AM pleased with your letter, Marquis: would you know why? It affords me a speaking proof of the truths I have been instructing you in, for some time past. I find you have, at length, relinquished your metaphysics, and speak of the charms of your Countess, with a certain warmth, that betrays your sentiments to be not quite so refined as you would have me believe, nor as, perhaps, you really imagined them yourself.

Tell me honestly, if love was not an effect of our senses, would you with so much pleasure contemplate that mien, those eyes, those teeth, those lips, you describe in so enraptured a strain? If the qualities of her mind and understanding only, had made the conquest of your heart, a woman of fifty years of age, perhaps, would have served better for this purpose, than the Countess. You see such a one every day: 'tis her mother. Prithee, why don't you fall in

love with her? Why do you neglect an hundred women of her age, of her homeliness, and her *merit*, who make advances to you, and would play the same formal part with you, that you perform before the Countess?

Besides, why do you desire with so much earnestness, to be distinguished by her from another? Why so uneasy whenever she shews the least civility to any man else? Her esteem for others, would it diminish that which she may have conceived for you? Are there jealousies, are there rivalships in metaphysics? None, that ever I heard of. I have friends myself, and I am not in the least uneasy, when they pay their addresses to any other woman.

Friendship is a sentiment that has no dependence on the senses: the soul alone, receives the impression, and the mind loses nothing of its value, by yielding itself to several, at the same time. Make a comparison, between this and love, and you will quickly perceive the difference between a lover and a friend. You will then acknowledge that I am not, after all, so absurd as you thought me at first, and that you cannot yourself, boast a heart less vulgar than the generality of plain, honest sort of people, whom you have been pleased to censure for their want of delicacy in this point.

I would not, however, bring the charge against men only: I am frank, and am very certain, that if women would be ingenuous, they might likewise confess, that they are not themselves, in any sort more *seraphic*, in this particular. If they imagined nothing more in love than the pleasures of intellect, and hoped to please by sense and character alone, why endeavour, with
such

such assiduous pains, to charm by the beauty and ornament of their face and persons? What have a fine complexion, an elegant form, a graceful fall in the shoulders, to do with the soul? What a contradiction here, between their real sentiments, and those they affect or assume! *See them*, and you will be convinced that their whole design is to be admired for their outward attractions; making very little account of any thing further. *Hear them*, and they would impose on your belief that their form and features are things which they hold in the slightest esteem.

But I am, perhaps, too officious in endeavouring to dissipate your error in this matter. Might I not leave it to their own industry to clear up this point to you? They would very shortly, give you sufficient reason for changing your present sentiments, with regard to this particular.

I am to pass this evening with Madame de Raymond, to hear the two Camus's and Ytier, perform in concert together. Mesdames de la Sabliere, de Salins, and de Monforeau, with Madame de Fienne, are to be there. Will you neglect so agreeable a party?

LETTER XII.

'TIS taking things most grievously to heart, Marquis! Two whole nights without closing your eyes! This is love, with a witness! One can have no longer the least doubt upon that point. You have made your lips and eyes declare your passion in the most explicit manner; and yet, she has not condescended to yield the least attention to your unhappy state! Such injustice cries aloud for ven-
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geance!

geance ! Is it possible, that after eight days intire, of sighs and assiduities, she could be so hard-hearted as to refuse you even a glimpse of hope ? 'Tis really what one cannot have the least notion of. So long a resistance will never pass for an historical fact. The Countess is an heroine in romance. But, if you begin to lose patience already, consider what you might have still to suffer, if you had continued your former refined sentiments — You have gained more ground already in those same eight days you complain of, than the *late Celadon* * would have done, in as many months.

But, to speak seriously to you ; is there any manner of justice now, in your complaints ? You stile the Countess ungrateful, insensible, scornful, &c. But prithee, tell me what right you have to charge her so severely ? Will you pay no sort of attention to what I have so often repeated to you ? Love is a very caprice, involuntary in the person whose heart is affected by it. Now answer me, why should you think one is obliged to any kind of gratitude, for a blind sentiment that has happened to seize you without your own choice, or their concurrence ? There is something singular in you men ! you resent it as an offence, if women do not immediately return the fond regards you *condescend* to bestow upon them : your revolted pride accuses them at once, of injustice ; as if it was their fault that your heads were turned ; and that they were under a sort of moral obligation, of being seized, at a certain given time, with the same disorder that you yourselves happen to be afflicted with.

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* Alluding to his former platonic character.

Is the Countess, I pray you, answerable for it, if her brain does not feel itself affected, at the same instant that you began to rave? Cease then, either to accuse her, or lament yourself. Endeavour to communicate your own malady to her. I know you very well: you are engaging enough—perhaps she may, too soon for her repose, conceive such sentiments towards you, as you could wish. Finally, I think that she has every quality to make an intire conquest of your heart, and to inspire you with such a taste, as may be requisite to make you happy.

I do not imagine her capable of a serious attachment. Lively, careless, peremptory, and capricious, she will, probably, afford you a good deal of work on your hands. A woman of an attentive, fond disposition, would suffer you to fall asleep. You must be treated with military discipline to rouse and preserve you in a proper state of life. Let a mistress once play the part of a lover, and she will soon find herself neglected—perhaps worse—The subject rises to a tyrant—treats her with a kind of carelessness or contempt, which leads finally, to inconstancy and disgust.

You have then, luckily met with every thing you wanted in the charming fair who causes your present most dolorous martyrdom. The poor Marquis! What a siege of troubles lye before him! How many squabbles do I foresee! What piques, what resolves to quit her! But remember well, that all these difficulties will become a real torment, while you continue to treat love like an hero of romance, and that they will be rather the *seasonings* of your pleasures, if you conduct yourself like a rational creature.

Should I not cease from writing to you? The moments that you lose in reading my letters, are they not so many *petty larcenies* in love? What an entertainment would it afford me to be a witness of your situation! In reality, for an unconcerned spectator, can there be a more amusing object in the world, than the emotions of a man in love?

Farewel.

LETTER XIII.

YOU seem to resent it, Marquis, that I should treat the situation you are in, after so ludicrous a manner: you would have me consider your present circumstances as a very serious business; but I cannot assume so much gravity, all on the sudden. Don't you observe that my way of dealing with you is agreeable to the principles I had before laid down? I speak lightly of a matter which I esteem a trifle, or a meer amusement: when we are upon a business of consequence to your real happiness, you shall find me then, assume a character proper for the occasion.

I have not, in truth, the least kind of pity for you, because I do not perceive any thing in your case which need move compassion. With a proper philosophy in this matter, what appears to you a pain, would become a pleasure. If you would succeed, use my prescriptions, and I warrant their effect. Let us proceed now, to the second article of your letter.

You are the more surprized, you say, at the coldness and reserve of the Countess, as you do
not



not believe them sincere. If I understand you, this conjecture is framed from the indiscretion of her friends. The advantageous things you hear she has said of you, even gave rise to the first sentiments you conceived for her. This stroke is extremely like you men. The least favourable word that escapes a woman, immediately inclines them to believe she has some design or other upon them. They attribute this conquest at once, to their own merit: vanity turns the slightest food to nourishment. If one was to examine ye closely, they would find that ye frequently love out of gratitude: and women in their turn, are not much wiser in this particular. So that galantry is a kind of commerce, where we would, each of us, have the other party in advance to us; and love to think ourselves in each others debt: and you know that true spirit is always more ready to pay, than bestow.

However, are we not apt to impose upon ourselves sometimes? How often does it appear that persons who imagine they are but discharging an obligation, are in reality, making the first advances? If two lovers would sincerely explain themselves upon the rise and progress of their passion, what curious kind of confessions should we have! Attend.

Eliza, to whom Valerio happened to address a meer compliment of course, returned it perhaps undesignedly, with a look and manner as if it had wrought a greater effect upon her mind than such common-place civilities usually do. This was enough: Valerio quickly changes his note: his general complaisance resolves itself at once, into particular regards: their mutual warmth insensibly increases, the fire is lighted, it blazes out, and behold a passion in form.

Now, if any one should tell Eliza that she had commenced this amour, that she had herself made the first advance, nothing could appear to her more unjust, and yet, nothing is more true, at the same time.

I conclude from hence, that in a proper sense, love is less the effect of that invincible sympathy so often pleaded, than of our own vanity. Observe the rise of all such attachments, and you'll find them proceed from the mutual praises we bestow upon each other. It has been said, that folly is the source of love.—But, give me leave to assure you it is flattery; and that there is no inspiring the heart of a fine woman with this passion, 'till you have first paid your tribute to her vanity.

To all which you may add, that the strong inclination we naturally have to love, is the reason also, of some illusion in this case. As *enthusiasts* by the sole force of imagination, fancy they see in reality, those objects toward which their superstition is attracted; in like manner, we persuade our minds frequently, into a belief of those sentiments in others, which we could wish to inspire them with ourselves.

Have a care then, Marquis, not to impose upon yourself by wrong conceptions. The Countess might have spoken favourably of you, solely with the innocent design of rendering justice to your merit, without any farther view; and you may, perhaps, be returning her an act of injustice, by suspecting her of insincerity with regard to her present conduct toward you.

But after all, why should you not permit her to dissemble her inclinations in your favour, if you have really inspired her with any? Have not women a *prescriptive* right for concealing
their

their sentiments from men? And does not the ungenerous advantages they are too apt to take, of their fondness for them, sufficiently justify such a conduct? Adieu.

L E T T E R XIV.

NO, Marquis—the curiosity of Madame de Seigné * has not given me any manner of offence. On the contrary, I am very well satisfied that she should see every letter I write to you. She was certainly of opinion before, that if my correspondence was upon the subject of galantry, it must have been intirely upon my account. But she has now found out her mistake. She may perceive by this instance, that I am not so slight as she imagined, and I believe her to be ingenuous enough to conceive for the future, a different idea of Ninon, than she has had for some time past.

However that may be, her injustice shall have no sort of influence upon my friendship for you. I am philosopher enough not to be uneasy about the opinions of those, who take the liberty to judge of, without knowing, me. Whatever may happen I shall continue to write to you with my usual frankness; and am persuaded that Madame de Seigné, notwithstanding her extreme delicacy, will be, upon the whole, more often of my opinions than she will have sincerity enough to acknowledge.

I come now, to what relates personally to yourself. Well, Marquis, after a world of pains and assiduities, you think at last, that you have been able to soften this heart of adamant.—

I am

I am really transported at your success; but cannot help smiling to find you interpret the sentiments of the Countess, after the manner you do. You partake, with the rest of your sex, an error which it may be necessary to undeceive you from, however flattering it may be in the contemplation.

Ye conclude, one and all of ye, that your peculiar merits alone inspire this passion in our hearts, and that your superior qualities of mind and understanding, are the sole causes of the love we conceive for you. What a mistake is here! But vanity is answerable for it all. Examine without prepossession, if possible, what is the real motive that determines yourselves in such engagements, and you will soon be convinced that you deceive yourself, that we impose upon you also, that, all things properly considered, you are the dupes of your own self-sufficiency, as well as of ours; and that the merits of the beloved object are nothing more than the *occasion* or *pretence* of love, and not its *efficient cause*. In short, that all this sublime theory, generally pleaded on the part of either, must ultimately be referred to the natural instinct which I formerly proposed as the *first mover* in this passion.

I have told you indeed a harsh and mortifying truth, but it is not the less certain for its severity. Women enter into life with this inclination undetermined, and if they chuse one man in preference to another, let them honestly confess that they yield less to a knowledge of his merit, than to a certain blind and mechanical impulse.

Need there be a stronger proof of this matter, than those indiscreet passions we are sometimes bewitched with, for persons absolutely unknown

known to us; or at least for men whom we are not sufficiently acquainted with, to be proper judges of their merits: and where if we hit right, must be the sole effect of hazard. We generally attach our affections without any sort of precaution; and it was a true parallel to compare love to an appetite, which one is frequently sensible of for one sort of food rather than another, without being able to account for such a preference.

It is very cruel in me to dissipate the chime-ra's of your vanity; but the truth will out. You are flattered with being loved, because you imagine it supposes some considerable merit in the object beloved. But you compliment this passion too much, I assure you; or rather you have too good an opinion of yourselves. Believe me, it is not for your sakes that we are fond of you: to be sincere, in love we solicit only our own pleasure. Caprice, interest, vanity, constitution, or the getting rid of that *weariness* which oppresses us while the heart remains void of attachment.—Some one or more, of these mean principles, are the source of all those elevated sentiments we are so apt to deify.

In truth, they are not your most heroic qualities which engage our affections; if they happen to enter into account among the reasons that determine us in your favour, it is not the heart which receives the impression, but our pride; and the greatest part of those things that render you agreeable to us, properly rated, would render you despicable or ridiculous perhaps, in another place.

Thus it is. We are fond of an admirer who will entertain us with the idea of our own excellence,

lence, we need some submissive subject to exercise dominion over, or to speak more plainly, our minds may have conceived a turn for gallantry. Chance presents us with one lover, instead of another: we accept, rather than chuse him. You fancy yourselves the object of disinterested affections: you imagine that women love you for your sakes alone.—Silly dupes! you are but the minister of their pleasures, or the slave of their caprices.

But, to do them justice, they are themselves, to the full as ignorant in this matter. The truths I here reveal, have no more enlightened their understandings, than they have yours. On the contrary, with all possible ingenuoufness they really imagine themselves determined and governed intirely by those sublime notions that both your vanity and their own have equally inspired ye with; and it would be therefore, the height of injustice to tax them with any manner of insincerity, in this particular: for, without the least consciousness of the matter, they first deceive themselves, and then impose on you.

You see, Marquis, that I here betray to you the secrets of the *Bona Dea*: judge of my friendship, when I endeavour to instruct you at the expence of my own sex. The more you comprehend the nature of women, the fewer follies you will be led into, on their accounts.

Adieu.

L E T-

LETTER XV.

TRULY, Marquis, I am surprized how you can support the severe manner in which I reason with you sometimes. I seem to have no other view but to chase away agreeable *illusions*, and substitute mortifying *realities* in their stead. I should certainly endeavour to break myself of my usual way of philosophizing upon every occasion. I am as sensible as any one can be, that one pleases more by flattering deceits, than by the soundest logic. But my character forces its way in spite of me. Nay, I perceive, even at this instant, an auxiliary of philosophy marching up to augment my forces, and you must collect all yours, to withstand the *broad-side* of moral we are preparing to salute you with. When this is over, I may promise you some relaxation. I have laid your letter before me, and shall return you a full answer to it.

No sir—I will not abate one tittle of it.—You may dispute with me as long as you please, upon the slight opinion I seem to have of my own sex.—Is it my fault, I pray you, if they supply me with mortifying truths to relate? Besides, Marquis, don't you know, that the person in the world, who thinks worse of a woman, is—a woman?

However, to justify myself seriously, from the notion you have conceived of my opinions, I must assure you that I am neither envious nor unjust. If I named my own sex in my last letter, rather than yours, do not imagine it was in order to censure them in particular. I only meant to shew you, that without being more to blame

blame than men, they are, however, more dangerous; because they are better accustomed to conceal their real sentiments. In short, you confess, sooner than they can be brought to do, what is your principal object in love.

Notwithstanding, when they assure you, as I said before, that their choice has no other source than a knowledge and approbation of your sense and merits, I am persuaded that they think themselves sincere. I even make no doubt but that when they happen to perceive the least indelicacy in their minds, upon this subject, they exert their whole sophistry to disguise it from themselves. But the motives I have hinted to you, exist nevertheless, in the bottom of their hearts: they are not less the true causes of their attachment toward you, and whatever effort they may make, to flatter themselves that they are determined by meer spiritual reasons, their vanity in this particular has not the power of altering the real nature of things. They endeavour to conceal their disgrace in this point, as they would take care to hide bad teeth, which disfigure a set of features, otherwise perfect enough. Even when they are alone, they are afraid to open their mouths, and the habit of disguising this blemish from others and then selves, bring them at length, to forget it intirely, or to pass it by as a matter of no consequence.

In truth, I agree with you that both one and the other of us would be considerable losers, should we affect to shew ourselves to each other, as we are really in nature. The world have agreed to act a farce together, and to exhibit *ourselves*, would be to quit the actor, and substitute the genuine character, instead of the
dra-

dramatis persona. Let us then revel in the enchantment, without striving to investigate the spell that charms and bewitches us. To anatomize love is to annihilate it. *Psyche* lost it by her curiosity. I take this fable to be a lesson against analyzing our pleasures.

Let me stand corrected thus far, that if I said it was a mistake in you, to be vain upon our preference, and that ye have not much to boast of from the motives which determine us in your favour, I have to add here, that we are ourselves, as much deceived, if we imagine those sublime conceits you stuff your amorous vows with, are produced by the influence of our charms, or the impression of our merit.

How often do we find that men who accost women with the most respectful air, who display such delicate sentiments, so flattering to their vanity, before them; in a word, who appear only to breath through them, to live for them alone, and to form no other desire but for their honour and happiness: how often, I say, are such men guided by motives the very reverse of all these pompous notions. Read and study the hearts of these *good creatures*, and you shall find in the breast of one, instead of that disinterested passion he is professing, but gross desire: in another, a vanity about an alliance with your family, or an avarice for your fortune; and a third may be determined by reasons even still more mortifying; to raise, perhaps, the jealousy of some other woman whom he loves better, and seeming only attached to you, in order to render you a publick sacrifice to your triumphant rival.

But, in truth, the heart is an insoluble riddle—a strange compound of contradictions! We
 imagine

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imagine we know what passes there—we see the effect, quite ignorant of the cause. Let us favourably suppose that it even expresses its sentiments with sincerity, yet this very sincerity is not to be depended upon. Its motions may arise from springs quite different from those it may be immediately conscious of: and, in truth, neither man or woman really know what principle it is that governs or directs their tastes or passions.

But, upon the whole, they have made the best of it: they explain every thing to their own advantage; supply the deficiency of genuine, by assumed merit; and accustom themselves, as I think I said before, to deify their vain imaginations. As all the world find their account in such deception, nobody sets about reforming it, nor even of examining whether it be an error, or no.

Farewel—if you pass this evening with me, you shall meet with company whose gayety will make you amends for the seriousness of this lecture.

L E T T E R XVI.

CAN it be possible, Marquis? Does the Countess really continue inflexible still? The careless air with which she receives your addresses, declares an indifference that drives you to despair!

Perhaps I may be able to sift this enigma for you.—I know you well: you are gay, lively, and capable of appearing to advantage before women you have no manner of attachment to; but where your affections happen to be in the least engaged—I have remarked it—you immediately

immediately grow timorous. Such behaviour may, perchance, win the heart of a country girl: one must use another sort of address with women of fashion.

The Countess knows the world.—Take my advice: resign your sublime theorems and elevated sentiments to the *Celadons* of the age: leave them to spin out such subtle systems. I can assure you, on the part of women, that there are few among us that would not chuse to be rather briskly, than too gently dealt with. Men lose more women by their timidity, than virtue saves.

The more awe a lover betrays, the more he interests our pride to inspire him with it: the more apprehension he seems to have about our resistance, the more respect we exact from him. If we were to speak our minds, we should cry out, “For pity sake, do not suppose us so in-
 “exorable! You lay us under the necessity of
 “appearing so. Do not set our conquest at so
 “high a rate: forbear to consider our defeat as
 “an insuperable difficulty: accustom us by de-
 “grees to see you doubt our indifference: very
 “often the surest means to be beloved, is to ap-
 “pear persuaded that one is already so.”

An unreserved, careless manner of behaviour, sets our mind at ease. When we perceive a lover, though appearing satisfied of our regard, still continue to treat us with the respect our vanity requires, we are too apt to draw a hasty conclusion, that he will behave in the same manner after we have given him more certain proofs of our affection.

What confidence does not this inspire us with? What progress may he not flatter himself to make? But, should he afford us the least
 hint

hint to keep upon our guard, it is not then our hearts we have to defend, it is not our virtue you have then to combat—'Tis our pride—and this believe me, is the greatest enemy you have to conquer, in women.

In short, we endeavour to hide it even from ourselves, that we have permitted you to address us. Leave it in a woman's power to equivocate with herself, suffer her to pretend that she has yielded to a sort of violence or surprize, let her perceive your esteem to keep equal pace with your love, and I will answer to you for her heart.

Treat the Countess according to her own character. She is full of gayety and mirth, and one must, in some sort, play the fool to win her. Let her not even perceive that she distinguishes you from other men; be always cheerful as she is lively, and you will fix your empire in her heart, before you warn her of your design. She will love you for some time, without perceiving it herself, and will at once be surprized to find how far her passion has advanced, without her being sensible even of its first movement.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XVII.

YOU will probably, think me more inhuman even than the Countess. She is the author indeed, of all your misery; but I carry my cruelty farther, by sporting with your distress. Oh, how I sympathize in your griefs! No person can be more interested in them, and your situation appears most lamentable to me!

For

For how can one make an explicit declaration of love to a woman who seems to take a malicious pleasure in evading every opportunity of the kind? Sometimes she appears moved with compassion; and at others, quite inattentive to every thing you do to please her. She listens readily, and replies with cheerfulness to the compliments and gay address of a certain Chevalier, who is but a *petit-maitre* in galantry; while to you she answers seriously, or with an absent air. If you speak to her in a tender and affecting stile, she passes you off after some slight manner, or immediately changes the discourse. All which inquiet, intimidates, and drives you to despair.

The poor Marquis! But I do most assuredly promise you, that all this betokens a true and real passion. The absent manner she affects before you, and the heedless air with which she disguises her sentiments, ought to convince you that in effect she is very far from being indifferent.

But your want of courage, the consequences she apprehends from such a passion as yours, the sympathy she already feels with your situation, all these alarm her; and 'tis you in reality, that fetter and constrain her behaviour. A little more resolution on your part, would soon set ye both at liberty. Remember what Monsieur de la Rochetaucault said to you lately; "A man of sense may be in love like a madman, but ought never, nor can be so like a fool."

In fine, when you draw a comparison between your respect, your esteem, and the free, nay rather too familiar manners of the Chevalier—when you frame a conclusion that you ought to have the preference upon this account; you are,
 not

not aware, with how little justness you reason, in this particular. The Chevalier is merely galant.—All he says is of no manner of consequence, and passes but as words of course. Vanity alone, and a habit of paying compliments to every woman he meets, make up the whole of his character. Love goes for nothing, or but a very trifle, in all his attachments. Like the Butterfly, he rests upon each flower but for an instant. A slight amusement is all his object. So light a character is not capable of alarming a woman. The Countess perceives with pleasure, how little danger there can be in receiving the addresses of such a galant as this: she knows, perfectly well, how to rate the regards of the Chevalier: and, to say all in a word, she considers him as a person whose heart is intirely exhausted. There is no woman, let her metaphysical notions be ever so pure, but knows very well how to make a difference between a lover of this sort, and such a one as you are.

Therefore, you will appear more formidable, and will be really more to be feared, from the manner in which you conduct yourself. You boast your respect and esteem—But I answer, you have neither one or the other; and the Countess is very sensible of this herself*. Nothing has a purpose less respectful, than such a passion as yours. Very different from the Chevalier, you exact acknowledgments, preferences, returns, nay, sacrifices—all which the Countess perceives at one view. Or at least, if
under

* Men sometimes mistake timidity for respect, and passion for esteem. A little experience undeceives them, and the error is not of much consequence. But 'tis too probable that many women have been undone, by not being aware of this distinction.

under the cloud that envelopes you at present, she cannot distinguish these pretensions so clearly, nature has given her certain præsentiments of what it may cost her, should she indulge you in the least opportunity of instructing her in a passion, which perhaps she partakes with you already.

Women seldom examine closely, the reasons which determine them either to resist or yield. They do not trouble themselves with investigating or defining them. But they have a sort of sensibility about the matter, and their sentiment is just. It serves them in the place of knowledge and reflection. It is a kind of instinct, which directs them often upon difficult occasions, and conducts them, perhaps, as safely as the most enlightened reason could do *.

Your charming Adelaide † would then play the *incognito* upon you, as long as she could. This scheme is very conformable to her real interests; and yet, I am persuaded that it is not the result of any reflection; nor does she perceive, on the other hand, that a passion outwardly restrained, makes but the stronger impression and greater progress within. Supply it then it with fuel, and give that fire she endeavours

* When philosophers find their investigation at a stand, they screen their ignorance by attributing the unaccountable effect to some *occult quality*. Here Ninon stiles the principle that guides us, *sensibility, instinct, a je ne sçai, quasi*, seeming at a loss to define it. I am afraid the poor unhappy woman lived and died in this ignorance. This *sensibility*, this *instinct* then, is *modesty*; which, like a guardian angel, directs and governs us, without the help of reason or moral, and safer too—Those require reflection—this prevents even thought.

† This alludes to a character in an Italian novel.

vours to smother, time to inflame the heart in which she strives to conceal it *.

Upon the whole, Marquis, you must be of opinion with me, that you have been mistaken in two material points, relative to this business. You imagined that you had more respect for the Countess, than the Chevalier had; but you will find that his addressees have no material design, while yours aim directly at her heart. Again, you apprehended that the absent, indifferent, and inattentive air with which she received your devoirs, were proofs or presages of your misfortune. Undeceive yourself, for there cannot be a more certain sign of a passion, than the efforts one makes to disguise it. In a word, whenever the Countess begins to treat you with the least indulgence while you continue to give tokens of your attachment to her—when she perceives you, without resentment, ready to make an explicit declaration of your fond sentiments towards her—I promise you her heart then is yours, and you may rejoice in a reciprocal passion.

Stay, a few words more. I had forgot to take notice of one particular in your letter, which related to myself. Yes, Marquis, I have constantly pursued the method I had at first prescribed to myself, in the beginning of this correspondence. There are few subjects in my letters that I have not made topics of conversation in my little society. I very seldom propose any opinions of consequence to you, 'till after I have collected

* The French words are, *Laissez lui donc, jeter de profondes racines, & donnez à ce feu, &c.* Here is a confusion of metaphor. This passion is first, compared to a tree; and then to fire. I have taken the liberty of preserving an uniformity of simile, by sticking to the latter allusion, throughout the sentence.

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collected suffrages upon the justness of them. Sometimes I consult la Bruyere, sometimes, St. Evremond: at other times, the Abbé Chateaufort, &c. You ought to admire my ingenuousness—Few people are ready to acknowledge the helps they borrow in writing—but I confess freely, that you are chiefly indebted to the company I generally converse with.

A propos—since we are speaking of men of distinguished merit, Monsieur de la Rochefaucault has just sent to desire I would name a day to go and see him. I have fixed on to-morrow, and I expect you will meet me there. You know well the affection he has for you.

Adieu.

LETTER XVIII.

I HAVE made some new reflections, Marquis, upon the situation you are in, and the embarrassment you seem to labour under at present. But after all, prithee what necessity for making a declaration of love in form? Is it because you have read in romances that they proceeded as methodically in galantry, as in a court of justice? This is too formal a process, believe me. Suffer, as I said before, the flame to light up itself, and acquire new force; and you will find, without having in terms expressed your passion, that you will be advanced farther than if you had made one of those express declarations at which, our grand-dames say, women should be so much alarmed.

A confession, absolutely unnecessary in itself, and which generally casts a cloud over an amour for some time—it suspends its progress.—Take my word for it, Marquis, a woman per-

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suades

suades herself that she is beloved, much better by what she herself observes, than by any thing the lover can say to her.

Behave yourself as if you had already made the declaration you are in so much pain about: attend the Chevalier, imitate his careless manner. Her behaviour toward him methinks seems to prescribe a rule of conduct to you. With your overstrained respect, and circumspect air, you appear a person who has some deep design in contemplation: one who is going to attempt some desperate stroke. Your whole deportment must necessarily alarm a woman who knows the consequences of such a passion as yours. Be assured, that while you suffer her to perceive your preparations for an attack, you will always find her *under arms*.

Have you ever known an experienced general, when he had formed the design of surprizing a town, make known to the enemy by his motions, upon which side he meant the assault? In love, as in war, is the conqueror ever called to account whether he owes his success to force or address? He has vanquished—he receives the laurel—his hopes are accomplished—he is happy! Follow his example, and you may obtain the same fortune. Conceal your march, disguise your designs, till opposition is vain; till battle is joined, and victory secured before you have denounced war. In a word, imitate those heroes whose enterprizes are only known by the happy event that attends them.

L E T T E R XIX.

• **A**T length, Marquis, she has heard you without resentment, declare your passion
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to her, and vow by all that lovers hold most sacred, that you will worship her eternally. Will you believe my prophecy, another time? However, she would treat you with less reserve, she pretends, if you would be a reasonable person, and limit your sentiments within the bounds of simple friendship: the very name of lover, shocks the Countess. Prithee do not differ with her about titles, provided in the main, that the matter is the same, and follow the advice that Monsieur de la Sabliere gives you in the following stanza:

Belinda will not yield to love,
But wishes for a friend sincere,
Whose tender conduct still should prove
His fond regard and anxious care:
And also should esteem her fair.
Lovers with caution urge your claim,
She only hates of Love—*The Name.*

But she distracts you with injurious suspicions about your sincerity and constancy: she refuses to believe you, because most men are false and perjured: she refrains from loving you, because they are generally inconstant. How happy are you, and how little does the Countess know her own heart, if she thinks that this is the way to shew you her indifference! Shall I give you the import of her conversation with you? She is touched with the passion you express towards her; but the complaints and misfortunes of her friends have made her apprehend that the protestations of lovers are generally false.

I think, however, that there is some injustice in this censure; for I, who am not apt to flatter ye, am really persuaded that they are almost

all sincere, upon these occasions. They become enamoured of a mistress, that is, they feel a strong desire to possess her charms. The fond idea which their imaginations form of this enjoyment, deceives them into a warm opinion that the pleasures they have attached to it, will only end with life. They never once dream that the fire which inflames their hearts, shall sooner or later, abate its fervour, languish, and become finally extinct.

This, though so certain an event, appears to them at that time, beyond all possibility: therefore, they really swear eternal constancy to us, with all the ingenuousness imaginable, and to suspect them, would be a mortal injury to their veracity. But—the poor ignorants promise more than they are capable of performing—not being aware that their hearts are not formed of a substance solid enough to retain always the same impression.

They cease to love, without knowing why—they even find a kind of a scruple, when they first begin to cool—they go on protesting yet, after their passion is extinct—they still *bold the course*, till after having jaded themselves in vain, they submit to indifference or disgust, and become inconstant with the same sincerity, as when they made eternal vows to the contrary*.

Nothing is more natural than all this. The emotion that a growing passion had excited in their breasts, conjured up the spell that deceived them. The charm is dissolved—the passion has subsided. What crime can be imputed to the lover, upon this account? He actually imagined

* What woman can ever pretend to be deceived, after the too true philosophy set forth in this letter?

imagined he could for ever preserve his constancy, at the time of his protestation.—And, perhaps, women may as frequently rejoice at this infidelity, because it eases them of a restraint over the fickleness of their own dispositions.

But to return.—The Countess charges you with the inconstancy of your sex; she fears you may become faithless, like the generality of lovers: ready to yield upon plausible assurances, she even solicits you for arguments to strengthen her opinion of your sincerity. The passion then, you profess towards her, does not in the least offend her. Offend her! It transports her. It flatters her so charmingly, that her sole uneasiness is, lest it should not be sincere. Dissipate her fears, make her believe the happiness you proffer, and which she already knows how to prize, is not ideal, but a real bliss. Proceed farther, and try to persuade her that it will not end till life itself shall cease. Her resistance grows faint, her doubts resolved, and with what willing assent does she yield to the slightest arguments tending to remove her suspicions and disquiets!

Women are much mistaken, if by their doubts with regard to the sincerity and constancy of men, they mean to declare their indifference or avoidance of the pleasures of love. When they express their fears lest the happiness itself may fall short of expectation, or that your inconstancy may render it so, do they not already betray a fond presentiment, and may not all their alarms be reduced to one only, that of being too soon deprived of their imagined *Elysium*? Hesitating between this fear, and a strong passion for pleasure, they become apprehensive, even from the imperfect view they have then of it,

that they may, perhaps, be too sensibly affected at its loss.

In fine, Marquis, you may suppose that every woman, who speaks to you in the stile of the Countess, addresses you after this manner: " I have a very high notion of the pleasures of love: the idea I have framed of them, is the most bewitching thing in the world: you may rest assured then, that I am as little indifferent to the injoyment of them, as you yourself can be. But—the more my mind is transported with this idea, the greater my dread is, lest it should all prove a fond *chimera*; and I only decline this happiness from an apprehension of seeing it terminate too soon. Could I have any tolerable security that it would be permanent, how feeble would my resistance be! But will you not abuse my credulity? May I not be one day, punished for my too great confidence in you? Alas, how soon may that day arrive! if I could hope to enjoy even for any reasonable time, the social pleasures of a mutual passion, all farther dispute upon this subject, should be immediately at an end."

L E T T E R XX.

THE rival they have given you, appears to me vastly formidable, from his being just such a person as I advised you to be. I know the Chevalier. There is no one more capable of that address which draws in the unexperienced. I'll hold a wager that his heart has not yet received the least scar. He attacks the Countess in cold blood. You are a lost man. A lover, as much enamoured as you appear to be, com-
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mits a thousand oversights: the best concerted schemes miscarry in his hands: every moment he gives advantage against himself: such is his misfortune, that precipitation and timidity ruin him by turns: he loses a thousand of these little opportunities which always gain some ground.

On the contrary.——A man who makes love for amusement only, profits himself of the slightest occasions: nothing escapes him: he observes the progress he makes: he watches all ungarded moments, and turns them to his own account: every thing conspires to aid his wishes: his very indiscretions are often the effect of deliberation, and advance his success: 'till at length, he acquires such a superiority, that he may almost name the day of his triumph.

Beware, Marquis, of pressing on too fast: do not betray passion enough to make the Countess depend too much on the excess of your fondness: let her feel some inquietude in her turn: oblige her to take some pains on her part, to secure her conquest, from the alarm you should purposely give her of losing it. Women never treat ye so cavalierly, as when they think ye too far engaged to quit them. Their virtue, less than their pride, renders them intractable. Like merchants, before whom you shew too great a liking to their goods, they rise upon you with as little conscience.

Moderate then, your imprudent earnestness.——Shew less of love, and you will excite the more. We never set so high a value upon any good, as in the moment we fear to lose it. A little policy in love, is absolutely necessary to the happiness of both. I might proceed farther, and advise you even to employ a little artifice.

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Upon all other occasions 'tis certainly better rather to be the dupe than the knave. But in gallantry, fools only are the dupes, and the knaves have always the laughs on their side.

I was going to take my leave, but cannot find in my heart to quit you without affording you one word of consolation. I would not discourage you.—However formidable the Chevalier appears to be, you ought not to despair. I suspect that the finessing Countess has brought him into play, merely to raise your jealousy. I do not mean to compliment you, but have the pleasure to assure you, that you have infinitely more merit than he. You are young, just entering into life, and have not yet loved.—The Chevalier *has lived*.—Where is the woman insensible to this difference?
Adieu.

L E T T E R XXI.

YOU would use integrity in love, Marquis ! You are far gone truly. I shall not shew your letter. You would be made a jest of. You cannot, you say, employ the artifice I advised you to. Your candour and refined sentiments might have raised your character in ancient days. Love was then considered as an affair of honour and punctilio. But at present, since the corruption of times has quite changed our notions, it is treated merely as a sport of vanity or caprice. Your inexperience has left a stiffness in your moral that will certainly demolish you, if your good sense does not supple you to the manners of the age.

One must not now-a-days, keep a window in their breasts. All is grimace: we must take up with complaisance, professions and outward shew :

shew: 'tis an universal comedy, and the world are much in the right to perform it. Society would soon be at an end, were we mutually to declare our true sentiments of each other, the bad along with the good. The necessary intercourse of mankind obliged them to lay aside this uncouth sincerity, and to assume a certain polished phrase, and flattering address in the place of it.

This habit by degrees, obtained in galantry, and notwithstanding your nice scruples, you must agree that when the manners of politeness are not employed to ridicule or deceive, they are to be reckoned among the social virtues—and the commerce in which 'tis most necessary to disguise our sentiments, is galantry. Upon many occasions, a lover gains as much by concealing the greatness of his passion, as he does upon others by feigning it.

I know the Countess, her character. She has more address than you. I dare say that she dissembles her affection for you with as much pains as you take to multiply the proofs of yours. I must repeat it again—Be less assiduous, and you will be better received. Make her jealous in her turn. Give her fears of losing you. I'll warrant then, you'll soon find her more complying. 'Tis at least, the surest way of knowing the rank you hold in her affections.

Adieu.

LETTER XXII.

ATEN days silence, Marquis! I really began to be uneasy. The application of my advice then, has been successful. I wish you joy of it. But I am angry with you for being,

H 5

chagrined

chagrined because she would not make you a confession in form. The *I love you*, it seems, is a precious expression with you. During this fortnight you have been endeavouring to penetrate the sentiments of the Countess, and have at length attained them. You have discovered her regards for you. What would you desire more? Would a simple confession give you any further power over her heart? There is something impolitic in this conduct: for do you not know that nothing is more apt to disgust a woman of any nicety, than the insisting upon that very expression she has refused you? You are much mistaken——To a lover of true delicacy, this refusal would be infinitely preferable to an explicit declaration.

Would you understand your true interest? Instead of pressing your mistress upon this point, you should endeavour rather, as I told you before, to hide from herself the progress of her attachment toward you. Contrive to win her affections before she perceives your design; and conceal it as much as possible, even from her own observation.

Can one imagine a situation more charming, than to perceive a heart interested on ones behalf, without the least consciousness in itself; growing warm by degrees, and melting away to the most perfect tenderness? What transport to rejoice in secret over all its emotions, to guide, to augment, to precipitate them, and to congratulate ones self on the victory, before the yielding fair has surmised even a suspicion of the siege! These are what I stile pleasures indeed!

Attend to me, Marquis, behave yourself toward the Countess, as if the confession had already escaped her. Perhaps you may never be
able

able to prevail on her to pronounce the words, *I love you*; but 'tis because she really loves you, that she will not say so; while at the same time she is doing every thing necessary to convince you of it. Women labour under great difficulties: they are at least as willing as you, to acknowledge the passion you have inspired them with. But what would you have them do, Marquis? Men, most ingenious to forge shackles for themselves, have affixed a certain shame to the confession of our passion; and whatever notions ye may have framed of our manners of thinking, believe me that this same declaration is always a mortifying circumstance to us. Those who have the least knowledge of the world must be very sensible of the consequences. The *I love you*, in itself, is certainly a very innocent expression; but the effects attending it, must necessarily alarm us. It rests upon you then, to conceal them from us, and to shut our eyes upon the precipice you are leading us toward.

Besides, Marquis, attend to this nice point. Your obstinacy in persisting in this confession, is less the effect of love, than vanity; and you will find it a difficult matter to deceive us about the real motives of your instances. Nature has endowed us with an admirable instinct; and has taught us to distinguish with great precision, between what arises from the passion itself, and what is heterogeneous from it.

Ever indulgent to the effects produced by the love we have ourselves inspired, we freely pardon ye the indiscretions, the extravagances—the whole catalogue of follies you lovers are liable to. But, you will always find us intractable whenever your pride attempts to combat
ours.

ours. It is hardly to be credited, but you often disgust us by things which are by no means necessary to your own happiness. Your vanity grasps at *shadows*, while *substances* escape you.

If you would govern yourself by my judgment, turn aside from this vain pursuit, begin to enjoy a surer earnest of your triumph; taste the dear pleasure of hiding this secret from her own heart, and suffer her for a while, to rejoice in her *insolvent* security. Suppose that your importunities should at length wrest this so envied phrase from her lips; what more certain advantage would you gain by it? Your doubts would they then cease? could you rest satisfied whether you owed this expression to complaisance, or to love?

I know women perfectly well. They may deceive by premeditated action, or deliberate speech; but the involuntary tokens of a passion they are striving to conceal, bear sure and certain testimony. In fine, the confessions truly flattering, are never those we make, but those that escape us.

LETTER XXIII.

WILL you pardon me, Marquis? I laugh at your afflictions! You take things extremely to heart! Some indiscretions of yours have raised the resentment of the Countess, and your inquietude is inexpressible. You kissed her hand with an emphasis that was taken notice of by the company; she shewed public marks of her displeasure; and the constant preferences you observe toward her, ever mortifying to other women, have exposed you to the piqued railleries of the Marchioness, her sister-in-law.

These

These are, in sad truth, most unfortunate events! But are you really so simple as to betake yourself to despair, upon the outward appearance of such a quarrel, without conceiving the least hope of an inward forgiveness? 'Tis left for me then, to re-assure your courage, and in order to this, I shall be forced to reveal some more of our female mysteries to you. I cannot upon every occasion make apologies for my sex.—I owe you frankness. I have promised it—and I acquit myself.

Women are generally actuated by two incompatible passions—the desire of pleasing, and the fear of infamy. Judge you of our embarrassment! On one hand, we are ardent to have witnesses of the effects of our charms.—For ever occupied toward the making ourselves taken notice of, and transported with every opportunity of humbling other women, we would render them spectators of every homage paid us, and of all the preferences we obtain. Would you know wherein the pleasure lies here? In mortifying the pride of our rivals meerly.—Those indiscretions which betray the sentiments we have inspired, delight us in proportion to their despair. In fine, such imprudences convince us better of your passion, than that timidity and caution which are incapable of celebrating our charms.

But, on the other hand, what bitterness allays our sweetest pleasures! Blended with these advantages, are the malice of our rivals, and perhaps the contempt of our lovers. Besides, another hard case is, that the world knows no difference between those who receive your addresses, and those who reward them. Alone, or in sober thought, every rational woman would pre-
fer

fer the character of chastity, to the same of beauty. But, place the best of us in competition with a rival, capable of disputing with her the prize——were she to risque that reputation she was the moment before so jealous of——was the lover, to endanger it to the last degree——no consideration is of equal weight with the triumphant pleasure of seeing herself preferred.

You will receive your preferences in turn; she will imagine at first, that she pays them to gratitude alone; but you will find them earnest of her affection. Avoiding to appear ungrateful, we exceed to fondness*. Your indiscretions then, never offended us. When we seem to resent, 'tis because we should save appearances, and that you would be yourselves the first to ensure a too remiss indulgence

But take care how you mistake this point.—Not to trespass, upon such occasions, would be a certain way to offend us. We recommend prudence and discretion to ye. Is not this the part given us to play? Is it necessary that we should teach you yours? Oft have I heard it said, that to take the *Letter*, was to mistake the *Spirit* of a law. You will answer our intentions, when you know how to construe them.

L E T T E R XXIV.

THE Countess, it seems, is at present on the defensive. You think she has now, no other

* There is the same sentiment in the Orphan.

" Great spirits bear misfortunes hardly;

" Good offices claim gratitude: and pride,

" Where power is wanting, will usurp a little,

" And make us, rather than be thought behind-hand,

" Pay over price." ———

other design but to prove your attachments. Whatever preferences you mark towards her, however indiscreetly you testify your passion, she receives them all without resentment:—the least, apology silences her reproofs, and her piques have something so engaging in them, that you even lay traps to provoke them.

I rejoice heartily with you in the pleasure that such a success must afford you.—But however these proceedings may flatter you, if you have any esteem for her you should endeavour to put an end to them. Women who have any sense, or the least attention to their reputations, but little understand their true interests in multiplying thus, by an affected incredulity, the occasions of censure. Must they not know it is not their most frail moments that most affect their characters? The doubts they pretend about the passion they have inspired, do them often more injury, even than their defeat itself.

While they remain incredulous, a thousand imprudences expose them. They *break bulk*, and vend their reputations by retail. While a lover finds them still dubious of his attachments, he throws aside all reserve whenever he meets with any opportunity of shewing the sincerity of his professions. The most indiscreet earnestness, the most distinguished preferences, and the most unguarded solicitude, appear to him the surest method of conviction. And can he make ostentation of all these cares and assiduities, without having them taken notice of by the world—without piquing the pride of other women—without provoking their most censorious reflections?

As soon as preliminaries are settled, that is, as soon as we begin to believe ourselves really beloved

beloved, nothing appears outwardly, nothing transpires.—And, if our engagements happen to be suspected, if our disguise is discovered, it must be from the recollection of what had passed before our affections were determined. I wish then, for the sake of both parties, that whenever a woman perceives herself indifferent to a lover, instead of suffering him to be amused by vain hopes, she would immediately give him his *audience of leave*. But at the same time, I would advise that the moment she is persuaded she is truly beloved by a man she likes, she will acknowledge this conviction. — *Saving and reserving to herself* however, the *dear right* of obliging him to hope, fear, pray and beseech, as long as she thinks fit, before she confesses her reciprocal affection. For one cannot seem to doubt, without laying the lover under a necessity of proving his sincerity; and he cannot demonstrate it with success, without making the public his confidants, by the too great earnestness of his devoirs.

This advice would have been by no means necessary in former times, when the want of address in men, suffered women to remain intractable. But now-a-days, that the resolution of the assailants leave us so little power of defence—at present, when it is affirmed, that since the invention of powder, no citadel is impregnable—why should we expose ourselves to the tediousness of a siege in form, when it is certain, that after a great deal of loss and trouble, we must capitulate at last?

Then teach your charming Countess this prudent lesson.—Shew her the inconveniences of any further diffidence; you will convince her
of

of your passion.—You will force her to believe you, by the management she should have of her reputation, which will supply her with one reason more for according you a credit which she has, perhaps, been for some time in pain to refuse you.

Farewel.

LETTER XXV.

MY last letter then, has provoked you, Marquis, and you insist upon it that 'tis not impossible to meet with virtuous women, even in these our days. And well! Did I ever deny it? In comparing women to places besieged, did I say that there were no towns which had never been taken? Nay, how could I say so, when there are many that were never invested? You see then, how perfectly I agree with you. But to prevent any farther mistakes between us, on this point, let me explain myself a little. Here follows my system of faith, upon this article.

I stedfastly believe in women of virtue, who have never been assaulted, or where the siege has been ill carried on. I believe also, in women of virtue, tho' assaulted and well invested—when they happen to have neither a turn for galantry, nor strong passions, nor opportunity, nor a disagreeable husband.

I have a mind to repeat to you, on this occasion, a sensible conversation I had once, upon this subject, when I was very young, with a certain prude, whom an unlucky adventure happened to betray to public censure. I had but little experience at that time, and judged always of others with that severity one is apt to pre-
serve,

serve, till our own personal weaknesses have inspired us with somewhat more of indulgence towards the failings of our neighbours. I had made very free with this lady's character, and she had heard it. I met her accidentally one day, at the house of a friend. She took me aside, and held the following discourse with me, which made such an impression on my memory, that the very words have not been yet effaced.

" It is not with design to reproach you, said she, with the liberty of speech you have taken relative to my misfortune, that I have sought this opportunity of entertaining you alone. It is to inform you of some sentiments upon this topic, which if you do not die very young, you may perhaps, one day, experience the full force of.

" You have censured my conduct freely, and seem to regard me with that disdain, which argues how much you are elated, on account of your having never yet given the world any manner of advantage against you. You imagine that you have virtue, and presume this principle will ever abide with you. These are, my dear child, but the illusions of your self-sufficiency. I am called upon to instruct your inexperience, and to make you suspect, that so far from being able to depend upon this same virtue, which renders you so inexorable to others, you cannot be certain even whether you have any of it, at all. This assertion may perhaps surprize you, but lend me your whole attention, and you may probably be soon convinced of the truth of my affirmation.

" Men have not yet paid their addresses to you : your mirror alone, has given you an
" idea

“ idea of your charms. Your heart—I judge
 “ from the carelessness of your whole deport-
 “ ment——has not yet entered you into its se-
 “ cret councils. The impulses of nature have
 “ not hitherto——*Here she was mistaken*——ex-
 “ plained themselves to you. While you re-
 “ main in such an indolent situation, or while
 “ your guardians *keep you in view*, if I may so
 “ express myself, I will myself be responsible
 “ for you.

“ But——after your heart has discoursed you a
 “ little——when those eyes that wound already,
 “ shall have received the addition of sentiment-
 “ tal life and expression——when those *win-*
 “ *dows to the breast* shall have betrayed love
 “ by intuition——when interior movements
 “ shall have roused you from supineness——in
 “ fine, when inclinations almost smothered by
 “ the scruples of a strict education, may have
 “ occasioned you to blush sometimes, in secret
 “——then, my dear prude, your own sensibility,
 “ and the struggles you will exert to overcome
 “ it, may by degrees, diminish your severity
 “ towards others, and suffer their failings to
 “ plead some defence before your too rigid tri-
 “ bunal.—The judge will mitigate the verdict.
 “ — The experience of your own weakness
 “ will caution you from deeming your virtue
 “ infallible. Nay, your surprize may be still
 “ carried farther, and the little aid you may be
 “ able to deduce from thence, will naturally
 “ raise some suspicion, that in reality, you ne-
 “ ver were possessed of such a principle at all.

“ Can one be assured that a man is brave,
 “ who has never been essayed? Women are in
 “ the same predicament. Experience alone,

“ equally..

“ equally approves chastity, and ascertains va-
 “ lour. ”Till we have tried an enemy, we are
 “ ignorant how far he is redoubtable, and what
 “ degree of prowess it may be requisite to op-
 “ pose to him *. In like manner, before a wo-
 “ man has a right to compliment herself on
 “ account of virtue or chastity as essentially
 “ within her own powers, she should be certain
 “ that no danger however great, no motive
 “ though ever so pressing, nor any pretence
 “ how plausible soever, can have force enough
 “ to overcome her resolution. It is requisite
 “ that the most favourable opportunity, the
 “ fondest passion, the surest reliance on secrecy,
 “ the most perfect esteem and confidence in
 “ the lover, in a word, that all these allure-
 “ ments combined together, shall not be suffici-
 “ ent to warp her integrity.

“ In reality, to be assured that her virtue is
 “ to be accepted, in the proper signification of
 “ the expression, she must be one who has vin-
 “ dicated her chastity from all these united dan-
 “ gers at once: for it would be but a slight merit
 “ to have resisted love, without constitution—
 “ opportunity, without passion—or desires, with-
 “ out occasion. Her chastity must still remain
 “ problematical, before she has been encoun-
 “ tered by all the forces that are capable of be-
 “ ing brought down against her. For it may
 “ well be urged, that with a different kind of
 “ com-

* Fighting is bravery, but declining it is prudence :
 and there is this happy difference between the sexes, with
 regard to this point, that men may sometimes injure their
 character, but women universally insure theirs, by avoid-
 ing the conflict. *The Parthian exercise is our best dis-
 cipline.*

“ complexion, she might not have resisted love:
 “ or, that an unlucky occasion might have gi-
 “ ven advantage against her.”

“ At this rate then, I replied, there may not
 “ be such a person in the world, as a virtuous
 “ woman: for, ’tis very probable that we may
 “ not be able to produce a single instance, where
 “ such a train of artillery has been played off
 “ against any one fortrefs.” “ ’Tis more than
 “ probable, says she; but would you know the
 “ reason? Because such a combined force is
 “ rarely requisite to conquer our resistance.
 “ Sometimes, one of these enemies alone, may
 “ be sufficient to do our business.”

I still debated—“ You seem to think then,
 “ said I, that our virtue is by no means in our
 “ own power, since you make it to depend up-
 “ on so many circumstances, foreign to our own
 “ election.

“ Certainly—prithee answer me—Is it with-
 “ in the power of your own election to give
 “ yourself a warm or a cold complexion? Can
 “ you assume resolution sufficient to combat the
 “ impetuosity of passion? Can you arrange all
 “ the circumstances of your life so happily, as
 “ never to find yourself alone with a lover
 “ you approve, who knows his advantages, and
 “ how to profit of them? In short, is it in your
 “ power to prevent his addresses, though in-
 “ nocent at first, from marking on your affec-
 “ tions, those impressions, which it is natural
 “ for them to strike? Those things are certain-
 “ ly, neither within our option, or our power.
 “ —And to affirm the contrary, would be as
 “ unphilosophic, as to say that steel may resist
 “ the loadstone.

“ And, . .

“ And, yet you pretend that your virtue is
 “ within your own province! How vain to at-
 “ tribute to ones self a principle to day, which
 “ we may be in danger of forfeiting to-mor-
 “ row! The chastity of women, like every
 “ other advantage, boasted or possessed by mor-
 “ tals, is a peculiar grace from heaven.—It
 “ is a *boon*, and therefore may be refused us.

“ Consider then, how partially you vaunt
 “ yourself, from the meer presumptions of your
 “ self-sufficiency; and acknowledge your injus-
 “ tice, in so uncharitably censuring those who
 “ may have received from nature an irresistible
 “ proneness to love, whom a violent passion
 “ might have overpowered, or who may have
 “ been surprized at some of those unlucky mo-
 “ ments, in which perhaps, you might not have
 “ extricated yourself with better success.

“ If you'll attend, I shall supply you with a
 “ farther proof of the justness of my reasoning.
 “ Are you not secretly of opinion, that every
 “ woman who would preserve her integrity,
 “ should assiduously parry every kind of advan-
 “ tage that may possibly be taken against her?
 “ That she ought to pay attention even to tri-
 “ fles the most minute in themselves, because
 “ they may lead perchance, to things of more
 “ importance? 'Tis much a safer refuge, to
 “ discourage the pursuit by a proper reserve,
 “ than to depend upon our defence, on the
 “ attack.

“ May not the proof of my proposition be
 “ evinced from this one argument also, that
 “ the experience of mothers induces them to
 “ lay every kind of restraint upon their daugh-
 “ ters, that prudence can devise? They pro-
 “ ceed

“ceed further.—A cautious matron depends
 “neither upon the principles of her ward,
 “nor on the fear of infamy, nor upon the un-
 “favourable opinions she has instilled with re-
 “gard to the morals of men : she keeps her con-
 “stantly *in view*: she opposes every difficulty
 “she can contrive, in the road of temptation.

“What is the reason of all these precautions?
 “Is it not that these guardians tremble for our
 “safety should they suffer us to be exposed for
 “one moment to danger? And yet, notwith-
 “standing all this *cloister* discipline, how fre-
 “quently does it happen, that love has the
 “power of triumphing over every bulwark!

“A young woman well educated, or to ex-
 “press myself juster, well attended to, con-
 “ceives a certain pride in her virtue, because
 “she is apt to impute it to her peculiar merit:
 “but in truth, it is only a slave, which tho’
 “closely chained, would challenge praise for
 “not running away.

“Prithee, look round, and observe among
 “what classes of life you generally find the
 “*forlorn hope*. Is it not in those where they
 “are neither rich or happy enough to be con-
 “stantly surrounded with all those *outworks*
 “which may have probably guarded yourself?
 “In those, where men have attacked them with
 “more assurance, more easily, more frequent-
 “ly, and consequently, with all manner of ad-
 “vantages? In those, where the impressions of
 “education, example, pride, or the prospect
 “of some happy establishment, have not de-
 “fended them? A rank or two lower you
 “might yourself have been born that very wo-
 “man whom you now disdain; and notwith-
 “standing those adventitious succours, which
 “have

“ have supported the virtue you are now so vain
 “ of, it is possible that in a few days, you may
 “ become more despicable than her, because
 “ you have had some advantages above her.

“ I do not, however, take away from the
 “ merit of your virtue, in order to lessen your
 “ attachment to it: but, by giving you some
 “ idea of your own weakness, I mean only to
 “ draw from you a little indulgence, toward
 “ those unhappy ones, whom too impetuous a
 “ passion, or the fortuitousness of other circum-
 “ stances, may have precipitated into a situation
 “ so truly mortifying to their own reflections.
 “ My sole intent is, to convince you, that you
 “ should not exult so much upon an advantage
 “ which you are not indebted to yourself for, and
 “ which the accidents of to-morrow, may per-
 “ haps, deprive you of.”

She would have proceeded, but was interrupt-
 ed by persons who joined us. It was not long
 before my own experience convinced me that I
 ought not to have conceived so high an opinion
 of many virtues, which had been imposed upon
 me for such before——beginning with my own.

L E T T E R XXVI.

I Perfectly agree with you, Marquis——
 Though the sentiments I communicated to
 you in my last letter, may appear true in specu-
 lation, it may, however, be dangerous that all
 women should be too much convinced of them.
 It is not through an opinion of our frailty, that
 we are likely to remain chaste; but from an
 happy persuasion that we are free agents, and at
 perfect liberty to resist or yield. Is it by telling
 a soldier

a soldier he shall be overcome, that you inspire his courage to the combat? But you might easily have perceived that the person who harangued in my letter, had a personal interest in establishing her philosophy.

It is true, that to look narrowly into the general frailty of human nature, her arguments will appear specious, at least;—but it may be justly apprehended that by allowing us to reason thus, upon the nature of virtue, we admit those rules to be doubtful, which we should implicitly accept, and practise as ordinances; the very examining into which is to be deemed a crime.

Besides, to persuade women that their virtue is not *specific*, would probably destroy their strongest motive for preserving it; namely, the fond opinion, that it is their own province they are defending. Discouragement would be the natural consequence of such an argument: so that it could possibly serve no other purpose, than to lessen the silent upbraidings of a frail woman, under the guilt of a vicious conduct. But, let us proceed to matters which are of consequence to yourself alone.

In fine, after a world of doubts, fears, and revolutions in your amour, you are at length convinced of your happiness. You have wrought up the Countess to one of those tender moments, when she could no longer retain her secret; and she has at length pronounced without reserve, that charming word, you have so long and passionately wished to hear the sound of. She has been carried farther.—Some involuntary testimonies have escaped her, which more sufficiently ascertain her affection toward you. These, instead of weakening your passion, have added new fuel to the flame. You are, in a word,

the happiest mortal alive. If you knew the thorough satisfaction I receive from your present situation, it would probably give some little increase to it.

The first sacrifice she offered you, was to banish the Chevalier. But you declined it, and you judged right. This would have been to have exposed the Countess, without gaining any thing, on your own part. And indeed, I have generally observed, that women oftener lose themselves by imprudences, than by real faults. The confidence you have reposed in her, by so generous a proceeding, must have a delicate effect upon her sentiment.

Every thing, thus far, is as well as one could reasonably hope for. But, to speak freely, the turn this adventure seems to take, begins to alarm me. We set out, if you remember, upon a maxim, that love was to be treated rather cavalierly: you were not to suffer that affection to obtain more than a slight and temporary sway over your heart, and not a formal and permanent empire. But I begin to observe, that matters by degrees, assume a serious face, and you actually seem of late, to consider this passion with a certain air of dignity, that renders me uneasy. The acknowledgment of true merit, real qualities, and an amiable character, seem to enter into the motives of your attachment; which joined to her more obvious beauties, have rendered you a *forlorn hope*, in turn. Esteem is a dangerous ingredient mixed up with galantry. It does not leave one sufficiently at liberty; and reduces love to an *occupation*, rather than an *amusement*. In fine, I became apprehensive, that your adventure may soon take a turn, perhaps rather grave, than gay.

But

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But, possibly, the spirit of the Countess may raise up fresh commotions; and new difficulties may re-animate your attachments.—Too profound a peace suffers it to relax. Security weakens love. When formal systems once take possession of the heart, passion subsides, indolence takes place, weariness succeeds, and disgust finally closes the scene.

L E T T E R XXVII.

MADAME de Sevigné does not agree in my opinion, you say, with regard to the true causes of love. She pretends that there are many women who know nothing but the fair side of this passion, and that the senses come not in for the least share in their attachment. She adds, that tho', what she is pleased to stile, my *system*, were true, it would be a very improper piece of philosophy for a woman to utter, and might have a bad effect upon morals.

These are serious rebukes indeed, but what foundation have they? None—that I can see. I am sorry to find that Madame de Sevigné has not read my letters in the *spirit* they were written. *Systems!* she does me too much honour truly. I never had studious application enough for *systems*. Besides I have always looked upon them as philosophic dreams; and does she receive all I have said as the sport of fancy only? We seem to be very far from a reckoning. I *imagine* nothing. I paint *real* objects. I would establish a certain truth—in order to which, I would not surprize the wit, but challenge the understanding. She might perhaps, be struck with some of my propositions, though they appeared to

me so very self-evident, that I did not stay to prove them. Nor indeed, is it worth while to borrow geometrical scales, for weighing a maxim in galantry.

Besides, I am so much averse to the pedantry of argument, that I would sooner give up a point, than contend it. Madame de Sevigné, you say, is acquainted with a great many female Platonists. Agreed.—Let her take her *exceptions*, and leave me the *rule*. I will grant too, if she pleases, that there are certain *privileged* souls in this wicked world—for I never denied the *virtues*—of *constitution*. These women I make her a present of also. I make no critic upon them. Their characters are irreproachable. They must not, however, expect encomiums from me. I wish them joy—if possible—and that's enough.

In the mean time, examine them philosophically, and you will perceive the truth of my original maxim. *The heart must be occupied*. If nature prompts not, or inclines them not more particularly to galantry, you'll find that some other object has laid hold of their affections, in its stead. Some become quite insensible to love, because they have expended all the sentiments they were capable of, upon some other passion. The *Count de Lude* I am told, has not been always regarded with indifference, by Madame de Sevigné—But a most parental fondness for Madame de Grignan swallows up the *whole woman* in her soul, at present.

She says farther, that I am extremely blameable toward my own sex: If I had the least charity, I should have concealed the faults or imperfections I have been so quick-sighted as to discover

ver in them—or, to express it more justly—that my sex has made me discover in myself.

But really, Marquis, do you imagine that if all I have said should be printed, women would be angry with me? You do not know them. On the contrary, they would find their account in it, greatly—for in effect, to say that they are led toward galantry by a mechanical impulse, is in a great measure to set them at their ease. Has it not the appearance of restoring the credit of their *fatalité*—their *stroke of sympathy**, which they are so ready to offer as excuses for their weakness; and in which, by the bye, I have so little faith. In considering love as the result of reason, you are not aware of the blow you give their pride, by rendering them thus responsible for their choice, good or bad.

In short, Marquis, women of every character would have cause to be satisfied with my letters. The metaphysicians, those whom their kind stars have *peculiarly organized*, might there observe with triumph, their superiority over others: they would congratulate themselves upon such advantage, and impute the merit solely to their particular virtue. While women of a less seraphic mold, ought to be much obliged to me for revealing a secret that lies heavy at their hearts. It has been made their duty to dissemble their sentiments, and they would maintain this decency, at as little expence of pleasure as possible. They would be pleased then, to have the truth discovered, without their betraying it themselves. Whoever, therefore, shall anatomize their hearts, will do them a most grateful piece of service. Thus should I recommend

* See the first paragraph of Letter VI.

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myself to our sex, by a double address, respectively agreeable; in adopting maxims that favour their inclinations, and by affording to some, occasions of displaying their extraordinary delicacy.

Indeed, Marquis, you discover a perfect ignorance of women, to imagine they would be offended at my philosophy upon this subject. 'Tis a certain truth that they would rather be even spoken ill of, than not to be spoken of at all. So that had I written these essays with that very uncharitable design now charged upon me, you see I have a tolerable chance of escaping, at least all *private* resentment.

But, Madame de Sevigné is also uneasy about the consequences of my *system*: which apprehension, from the high opinion I have of her understanding, I am surprized at. By disarming Cupid of his arrows, by considering love as an effect of constitution, vanity or caprice, by distinguishing the humble passion itself, from the metaphysical dignity of it, have I not rendered it infinitely less dangerous to mankind, than it would be, if, according to her *system*, we should *consecrate* it among the virtues? In fine, you may compare me, if you please, to one of the ancient legislators, who is reported to have lessened the power of women over his citizens, by shewing them naked.

But I shall make a further effort in your favour; and since I am taken for a *systematical* reasoner, I shall not seem altogether unworthy of so flourishing a title. Let us for a while then, discuss the point of galantry, with that method and philosophy, which might become the most serious topic.

Is not love a passion? Do not your severe moralists affirm, that passions and vices are synonymous? Is vice ever more seducing, than when it assumes the character of virtue? It ought never therefore, to be suffered to appear but under such disadvantages, as might alarm the chaste mind. This, however, was not the design of the *Platonists*, when they so prophanely deified it. And in all ages, have they not endeavoured to authorize the passions, by inrolling them among the pagan hierarchy? Behold! I step forth a reformer—I descry the popular superstition—I break the vain idol—but confess my rashness at the same time, and must expect a female persecution for attacking thus their favourite worship.

I own I am much concerned upon this account myself. They were rare times truly, when women might acknowledge their fond impressions, without a blush—nay, even boast their passion, and shield their *weakness*, under the *strength* of the deity. But, why must poor humanity be superseded? Why disclaim its power, and search in heaven for the causes of our foibles? Let us abide on earth, and inquire for them here—We shall find their dominion intirely below*.

I 4

In

* The ingenious author of the *Dialogues of the Gods*, in his preface, speaking of the refinements of love, says, “ I am not certain that morals have gained much by the change.—They have rendered this passion more alluring by taking away every appearance of vice from it. “ As it is disguised at present, we deliver ourselves up to “ the impression, without a blush, and who dares reproach “ us with a vice that has so much the appearance of a “ virtue? Romances are full of admirable sentiments.— “ All manner of virtues are there displayed.—The “ grossness of love is subtilized into delicacy, and the heroes and heroines are certain pure intelligences, whose “ bodies . . .

In reality, I have not in any of my letters, expressly declaimed against love, nor have I advised you to leave it out of your scheme of life. I know too well, the uselessness of such counsels. But I have let you into the true secret of the matter; by which I have lessened the illusion it might otherwise have led you into.—I have at least, diminished its influence over you, and every day's experience will support my doctrines.

I know that they act very differently in the education of women: but what is the consequence? They begin by deceiving them—possess them with as great a fear of love, as old nurses do of sprites. Men are represented to them as monsters of perfidy and infidelity. A handsome young fellow presents himself: his sentiments delicate; behaviour modest and respectful. The fair one, who has been educated in the manner above mentioned, will immediately conclude she has been imposed upon. She will find the sentiments that this same *monster* has excited in her breast, to be of a very different kind from those of horror; and as soon as she detects any exaggeration, her instructors will begin to forfeit all further credit with her.

They mislead them also another way, and how can it well be avoided? They take infinite care not to let them know, or even suffer them to imagine, that they shall be attacked by the senses; and that these are the most dangerous enemies they will have to encounter. In short, they speak to them as if they were perfect angels. The consequence of which is, that not having been properly warned of the nature of the attack,

“bodies are but merely *accidents*, which are by no means
 •• “instrumental to their pleasures.”

tack, they may not be sufficiently armed to sustain it. How could they ever take it into their heads, of themselves, that their most redoubted adversary, should be one that they had never once been cautioned against? And what sort of *extempore* defence can they make, upon the occasion?

It is not then, the lover they should have been forwarned of—it is themselves.——For what avails the lover's *wisbing*, without the fair-one's *willing*? So that, Marquis, when I acquaint my sex, that their weakness lies in nature, I do not mean to encourage them to follow their inclinations; but, on the contrary, to caution them against their greatest danger. 'Tis like informing the governor of a citadel, that he was defending himself in the wrong place, being in more hazard of being betrayed within, than conquered from without.

In fine, by rating at their just value those sentiments to which women have annexed such sublime ideas, and by making known the true intention, of even the most refined lovers, you may perceive, that I pique their vanity to be less ambitious of being beloved, and their hearts to receive less self-approbation, in loving. And be assured, that whenever we can oppose pride to pleasure, some advantage will generally be gained, on the part of virtue.

I have had lovers myself; but they never could impose on me. I well knew the whole scope of their addresses.——I was certain, that if my sense or character had any share in the motives which determined them to throw themselves at my feet, it was merely because those merits flattered their vanity. They loved me because I was handsome, and they had desires.

For which reason they never obtained more than the second place in my esteem—the first being always occupied by my friends. For friendship I have ever preserved that deference, that constancy and respect, which so noble a sentiment deserves—one so worthy of possessing the generous mind.—In a word, I have always conceived a diffidence of those hearts, where love appeared to be the principal guest. This weakness degraded them in my eyes; and I regarded those persons as incapable of exalting their souls to sentiments of true esteem toward a woman whom they had principally wished to enjoy.

You see then, Marquis, that the consequences to be drawn from my premisses, are by no means dangerous. All that can be said to me by persons of any sense, is, that I have taken a great deal of idle pains to prove to you a proposition, that was obvious enough before. But your inexperience and curiosity must be my apology for what I have written, or may hereafter say to you upon this subject.

Farewel.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

YOU are certainly right, Marquis.—The taste and talent that the Countess has for music, will bring a great addition, both to your love and happiness. I have frequently told women the infinite advantages they might reap from the due improvement and exercise of their accomplishments. There are very few occasions, upon which they would not be serviceable to them.

Women

Women generally imagine, that they have nothing to fear, but the presence of the lover. True indeed, that they may have then, two enemies to contend with, at a time; their passion, and the party. But when the lover has retired, the love still remains; and the progress it makes in solitude, though less perceivable, is not the less dangerous. At such intervals as these, the playing on a harpsichord, painting a flower, or reading some work of genius, may turn aside the thoughts from ideas too alluring, and fix the attention upon safer objects. All these occupations then, which employ the mind, are so many *countermines* to temptation*.

A lover has an opportunity of entertaining his mistress apart: she has beauty and good-humour only: what can he do with her? how amuse himself, without sense or variety? Love is active; 'tis a voracious flame, and still demands fresh fuel. If it has nothing but objects of sense, to exercise itself upon, it must lay hold on those, and make the best of them. In short, if the *mind* be not employed, the *senses* will. He is reduced to the necessity of *dumb-show*, and of explaining his passion in the least equivocal manner, to a person who is not capable of understanding a more delicate language.

It is not merely by resisting attempts, or resisting freedoms, that women can expect to preserve their virtue. When they suffer themselves

*. Shakespear has a fine poetical moral upon this subject, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell.—

"It was upon a little western flower,

"Before milk-white—now purple with love's wound;

"And maidens call it *Love in idleness*."

selves to be attacked, after such a manner, their very defence alarms the senses; the emotions of resistance hazard their defeat; and they are yielding, even in the conflict. But 'tis by presenting other and various objects to the lovers attention, that they may best evade such enterprises; the mortification and danger of which, I am sorry to say, they have themselves mostly to charge with: for 'tis almost certain, that men rarely make attempts, except where indiscretions have given the encouragement.

There is no man of any education or knowledge of the world, but can easily judge to what degree of freedom he may venture to extend his behaviour. For which reason, I have never attended to women who have complained to me of a lover's rudeness. Upon examination, I have generally found that some imprudent or inconsiderate conduct of theirs, first gave occasion to it. Women have no other way left, of *begging the question*.

But indeed our want of sense or education may, as I hinted before, subject us equally with our indiscretions, to the same misfortune. For, with a woman who has neither wit or accomplishment, what can a man do, but *enterprize*? He has no other way to rid his time of her, but to romp or teaze. He cannot pretend to introduce any other topic of conversation, except her beauty, with the deep impression it has made upon his senses; and one must use the language of the senses, to express their effect. Nay, how can she seem convinced of your passion, declare her sympathy, or return your flame, but by the senses alone? by shewing her emotions equal to your own? or at best, her expiring chastity has nothing left to oppose but

but peevishness only—the last resource of a silly woman : and a wretched one it is !

What advantage, on the contrary, has a woman of address and spirit ? A lively repartée, a disconcerting raillery, a quick resentment, an apt quotation, or an applicable story, are not these so many *diversions* in her favour, and so much good time gained on the side of virtue ?

Womens chief misfortune is certainly this ; their not having been rendered capable of occupying their minds with objects worthy their attention ; which renders love a more violent passion in their breasts, than it usually is among men. But they possess at the same time a lucky sentiment, which under proper direction, is of admirable service to them. Their vanity is at least equal to their sensibility. Oppose one to the other. While a woman is taken up with the ambition of pleasing, otherwise than by her person, she for the time, attends not to the very sentiment that has excited her desire to charm.

—In reality, this same sentiment will nevertheless continue to be the *determining motive*, if I may use a term of science, but it will cease to be the present and immediate object of her passion ; which, let me assure you, is a great kind of eminent point gained. Intirely occupied in acquiring that she has set her heart upon, this very aim, though guided by love itself, will turn against it, by dividing the attention of the mind, and the affections of the heart.—This is perplexing the enemy, by presenting two objects of operation, at once.

You will tell me, perhaps, that according to this reasoning, women of wit and talents should be looked upon as impregnable ; and that men naturally hating trouble, should avoid such pursuits.

suits. And yet, you'll add, that the stupid, as well as the sensible, equally address such women.—'Tis very true.—But the true reason also is, that blockheads know not the difficulty, and that men of spirit love to surmount it.

Besides you are a military man, Marquis, and ought you not to agree with my maxim, about talents? Suppose you should obtain the conduct of a siege, on the approaching campaign, would you be pleased that the governor, from an opinion that the town was not tenable, should surrender before you could have an opportunity of signalizing yourself? I know you would not. You would have him hold out. The more care he takes of his own glory, the higher he raises yours.

In love, as well as war, the pleasure of conquest is measured by the difficulty. Shall I speak out? I am tempted to carry the parallel farther.—This is the danger of entering into subjects.—The true merit of a woman, consists perhaps less, in not yielding at all, than in making such a defence as may intitle her to the honours of war.

To proceed. If a woman has had the misfortune to be overcome, what fetters can she forge to bind the successful lover, if she be deficient in sense or talents! I acknowledge indeed, that female education is not over-rich in these endowments. Yet, if you consider the matter a little, you'll agree, that there is hardly any woman, who with proper application of time and common sense, might not procure some one or more of those advantages: the difference lying only, in the more or less.

But

But we are naturally too indolent for such spirited efforts. We find beauty to be an universal merit. This method of winning hearts requires no manner of trouble, and we could wish there were no other. Blind that we are! we never consider that though beauty and talents equally gain admirers; the first endangers the possessor, while the latter serves for their defence.

In reality, beauty prepares but mortification and regret, against the quick period of its decay. Would you know the reason? because it has betrayed us into a neglect of more permanent attractions. During its frail empire, we find ourselves prized, sought, and celebrated. We hold our court. Our short sight foresees no end of admiration.—But, oh! the solitude horrible, when age or accident shall have wrested from us, the poor, the only stay of our dominion! I could wish then, (the allusion is not elegant, but it will express my sense) that beauty served only as a *sign* to declare the *entertainment* within.

Let us conclude therefore, Marquis, that in love, sense and talents are of the highest consequence. This is a *comedy*, in which the *acts* are the shortest, and the *interludes* the longest of any. How shall we amuse the intervals of dalliance, without the resources of the understanding? Possession places all women on a level, and subjects them equally to your inconstancy. The beautiful have, in this particular, but little advantage over the homely. Sense and accomplishments make the chief difference between them. These alone supply that charming variety, in love and life, which relieves from tediousness and disgust.

In fine, nothing but the improvements of the understanding, can replenish that irksome void in the heart which is consequent upon a passion gratified.—Nor is there any thing which can possibly be more serviceable to us, in whatever situation we may happen to be circumstanced; whether in retarding our defeat, in rendering it more richly prized, or in assisting us to regain our empire. Even our lovers reap advantage from them. How many accomplishments should they encourage in us, though they turn at first, against themselves? Thus the Countess by cultivating her excellent talent for music, acts equally agreeable both to your interest and her own.

I have read over my letter, dear Marquis, and am afraid you will think it too grave and philosophic. This is the consequence of bad company. I supped last night with Monsieur de la Rochefaucault, and I never part from him without being infected after this manner, for a day or two, at least.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XXIX.

I Agree with you, Marquis, that the Countess punishes you too severely, for the confession you have surprized her into. Is it your fault that she could not preserve her own secret? She has, however, advanced too far for a retreat now. We will indulge her in a few mortifying reflections on the occasion; but to carry it so far as to refuse your visits for three days, to direct them to tell you that she was retiring
into

into the country for a month, and to return your tender billets with unbroken seals, is in my opinion, a very caprice of virtue. But after all, prithee despair not. If she was really indifferent, trust me, she would be less severe.

Do not mistake the matter—upon such occasions, women are less out of humour with the lover than themselves. They are mortified to find their weakness is ready to betray them every moment: they therefore, punish you, and consequently themselves, at the same time, by an affected reserve. But be assured one day's caprice of this sort, advances more the lover's success, than a whole year of his own assiduity. The generous fair one soon begins to reproach herself for the dissingenuousness of her behaviour, she quickly perceives the injustice of her conduct, she would make reparation for it, and rushes unawares, into the contrary extreme.

I am surprized at that part of your letter, where you say, that since the Countess has appeared to love you, her character has been intirely changed. The cause of this alteration I am quite unacquainted with. All I know is, that she has of late presented herself to the world, a perfect *Lady Townly*; and so gay a life has been the more remarkable, as her conduct was the very reverse, while her husband lived. You remember when you were first acquainted with her, that she was lively, even to excess; heedless, haughty, coquettish; and appeared perfectly incapable of a serious attachment. And you tell me now, that she is become gay and reserved: that she seems to be absent, timid and obliging: sentiment has succeeded to dissipation, and natural manners have
taken

taken the place of affected ones. In fine, she appears to enter so well into her present character, that you conclude it to be her real one; and that the former was but a borrowed part.

All this would certainly puzzle my philosophy, if I could not account for the metamorphose as an effect of love. I am much mistaken, if the opposition you meet with at present, be not an earnest of the most complete victory to you; which is the more assured, because she has taken every measure in her power to dispute it with you.

If you still keep your object in view, if you suffer no time or place to escape you, so as that she may remark the assiduity of your regards— if you refrain from urging, for a while, your passion, preserving at the same time, an attentive, respectful, but enamoured air, what must be the consequence? She cannot withhold from you that regard which one is naturally inclined to pay, in such circumstances, even to a person one is indifferent to. Women besides, have an inexhaustible fund of kindness for those who love them; which you men are perfectly well apprized of; and 'tis that which keeps up your spirits when we appear to use you ill. You conclude, that those whom our virtue keeps at the greatest distance, are certainly those who alarm it the most.—And unluckily, your sentiment is but too just.

Our prudence keeps us aloof, where we apprehend the engagement may be to our disadvantage: we do sometimes more, even brave the enemy, whose attack we dare not wait for. In a word, the courage of a woman is always capable of a first effort; but rarely repeats it. The very excess of its violence, is often the cause

cause of his subsiding too soon. The mind has but a certain degree of strength, and when that is exhausted by its own exertion, it naturally sinks into indolence; and the apprehension of its own weakness, discourages it from any further activity. A person may support the first onset of an enemy, with resolution, whom the experienced difficulty may deter, on the second.

A woman, persuaded that she has tried every thing in her power, to defend herself from a passion which enthrals her, and satisfied with the conflicts she has already sustained, begins soon to conclude, that all further resistance against the force of love, must be in vain; and if she still holds out, it is not from any resource, yet remaining within herself: her security arises from the opinion of her chastity with which she has inspired the lover, and the despair which her long resistance may have possessed him with.

So that every prudent woman should begin with making a good defence; and pride alone is sufficient to spirit them up to this. But unhappily, ye foresee the means of conquest.—Persevere, and we are not impregnable.—And ye are so shamefully indelicate, that provided ye obtain the prize, ye remain indifferent, whether your success be owing to importunity, or free consent.

In fine, Marquis, the extreme precaution the Countess uses against you, proves sufficiently your power over her. Were you an object indifferent to her, would she take such pains to fly you? I promise you she would not pay you so great a compliment. But lovers are unaccountable creatures.—Always ingenious to
ter-

torment themselves, the habit of occupying the mind with one dear object only, is so strong in them, that they would rather think of it disagreeably, than not at all.

However, I have great compassion for you. Smitten as you are, your situation is most dolorous. My poor Marquis, how they use it!

Adieu.

L E T T E R X X X .

I AM pleased at finding, before I set out for the country, that you begin to appear somewhat more tranquil in your mind. I frankly confess, that if the Countess had persevered in her severity, I should have imagined, not that she was insensible, but that some more lucky rival had intervened. Such a resistance would have appeared beyond the power of reason, supposing her to have sustained the siege alone: for be assured, Marquis, that a woman is never more untractable, than when she disdain she manifests to other admirers, arises from the particular attachment she may have conceived towards a favoured lover.

What you tell me, however, convinces me that you are beloved, and that you alone are so. I shall soon be able to give you certain and constant accounts of this matter, for I am resolved to examine the Countess in person, myself. This declaration doubtless surprizes you; but your astonishment will cease, when I tell you, that Madame de la Sabliere's villa, whither I am going to spend a week, joins the estate of your amiable widow; and you inform me that she has already set out for the country. Add
our

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our vicinity, to the extreme desire I have to be acquainted with her, and you will no longer be surprized at the promise I have now made you.

They will not give me time to finish my letter, nor even to send it. I must set out, this instant.—My fellow-traveller raillies me, and fancies I am penning a *billet-doux*.—I let her amuse herself, but shall carry this letter with me, to finish in the country.

Adieu.

P. S. It seems then, that Madame de Grignan's illness is to prevent your paying us a visit in our retirement!

From the Chateau de - - - - -

I write to you from the Countess's, my dear Marquis.—This is the third day I have passed here. You may judge from this, that I am upon good terms with your beloved fair. She is really an amiable woman: I am quite charmed with her. I sometimes doubt whether you deserve to possess such a heart as hers. Behold me now, her chosen confidante.—She has told me all her sentiments of you, and I do not despair of being able to discover the motives of that inconsistency which you have remarked in her character, before I return to Paris.

I dare not say more to you, at present.—I may be surprized while I am writing; and I would not have it even suspected, that I correspond with you from hence.

In haste, Adieu.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXI.

I Have something to tell you, Marquis, worth attending to. I was resolved to keep my word with you, and while I was forming my address in order to extract the secret from the Countess, a lucky chance saved me any farther trouble. You know the confidence she places in Monsieur de la Sabliere. She was just now with him in one of the arbours of her garden: I crossed a parterre to join them, and was near the door when I heard your name mentioned. I stopt short, and was not perceived: I overheard every word, and am now retired to give you a literal account of the whole conversation.

“ I have not been able it seems, said she, to
 “ hide from your penetration, my regards for
 “ the Marquis de Sevigné; and you cannot re-
 “ concile the seriousness of a settled passion,
 “ with the liveliness of my former character.
 “ But you will be much more astonished, when
 “ I inform you that my exterior behaviour
 “ marks not my true character; that the
 “ gravity which surprizes you at present, is
 “ but a recurrence to my real self; and in a word,
 “ that I have only assumed the appearance of a
 “ *fine lady*, through design.

“ Perhaps you may imagine, that women can
 “ disguise only their imperfections; but they
 “ sometimes carry it farther, Sir, of which I
 “ am myself one example: they can disguise
 “ even their virtues! And since I have enter-
 “ ed upon it, I am tempted, at the hazard of
 “ tiring your patience, to acquaint you with the
 “ singular

“ singular process which conducted me to this
“ point.

“ During my husband's life, I lived intirely
“ in the country. You knew the Count, and
“ his love of retirement. Upon his death, I
“ thought it proper to come a little into the
“ world, but was for some time embarrassed
“ about the fittest character for me to appear in.
“ I examined myself closely.—There is no equi-
“ vocating with one's self.—I found my love of
“ social pleasures strong; but governed at the
“ same time by a firm resolve, to preserve a
“ pureness of moral throughout. How to blend
“ these happily together, became then the ques-
“ tion. It appeared to me an extreme difficul-
“ ty, to frame any system of conduct, that
“ without laying me open to the censure of the
“ world, on one hand, should not deprive me
“ of its most flattering pleasures, on the other.

“ I reasoned with myself thus. Destined to
“ associate among men, formed to please them,
“ and partake a mutual happiness together, we
“ must expect to suffer likewise from their
“ faults; and the one we have chiefly to re-
“ proach them with, is their ungenerous calum-
“ ny. One would imagine that the whole
“ scheme of our education, was to render us
“ complete objects of love; and in truth this is
“ the only passion which is permitted us: yet,
“ by a most unaccountable and severe contra-
“ diction, they leave us a right to but one sort
“ of fame, which is that of resisting all the im-
“ pulses of this very passion. I deliberated then
“ with myself, about the best measures for ac-
“ commodating my conduct to such opposite
“ extremes, at the same time; and found my-
“ self surrounded by difficulties on all sides.

“ We' .

“ We are simple enough, thought I, on our
 “ first entrance into life, to conceive the high-
 “ est felicity to consist in mutual love: we then
 “ suppose this passion to be founded on esteem,
 “ sustained by the acknowledgment of every a-
 “ miable quality, refined by the most perfect de-
 “ licacy of sentiment, unfulfilled by the least
 “ idea, *unseraphic*; and finally, corroborated
 “ by the reciprocal confidence, and unstrained
 “ overflowings of too fond, chaste and faith-
 “ ful hearts, now melted into one. But unfor-
 “ tunately, this image, so flattering for our sex,
 “ flits from us like an *Utopian* dream, whene’er
 “ we try to fold it in our embrace. We are
 “ soon undeceived—and yet generally too late.

“ At my first observations on men, I was
 “ child enough to be equally scandalized at their
 “ inconstancy and treachery: but upon reflec-
 “ tion, one must agree, that the first of these,
 “ is rather an *imperfection*, than a *fault*, and
 “ renders themselves more *unhappy*, than *guilty*.
 “ When ’tis considered of what stuff their hearts
 “ are made, one cannot expect that first impres-
 “ sions shall preclude all future forms. But,
 “ are we to grant the same indulgence to their
 “ other vice? Most men attack us in cool blood,
 “ to make us serve for their amusement, or to
 “ sacrifice us to their vanity;—to fill up the va-
 “ cation of an idle life, or to atchieve a sort of
 “ character, at the ungenerous expence of ours.
 “ The greater number are of this kind; and
 “ how shall one be able to distinguish them from
 “ genuine lovers? Outward appearances are in
 “ both the same; and he who *feigns* a passion,
 “ has the odds against him who *feels* it.

“ We

“ We are besides, silly dupes enough to consider love as our principal concern, while you men treat it as an amusement only. We rarely yield our persons without our hearts, while you are indelicate enough to make *desire* supply the place of *passion*. We believe constancy to be a duty; you change upon the first disgust. You scarce preserve decency in quitting a mistress, the possession of whom, six months before, constituted your chief happiness and pride; while the forsaken fair one may not ill compound, if the faithless lover does not give her still further reasons to repent her confidence in him.

“ These reflections then, wrought up my mind to the most serious philosophy, and I thus went on debating. If love draws such a train of evils after it, a woman who has any manner of esteem for her reputation or repose, should cancel this passion quite out of her scheme of life. But how to compound the matter with our hearts! Our hearts are formed for love, and love is itself, involuntary! How then annihilate a passion interwoven with our nature? our sole resource must be to regulate it. Let us deliberate upon the best means of compassing so desirable an end.

“ What kind of love is most dangerous? certainly that which occupies the soul intire, which swallows up all other passions, renders us incapable of any other sentiment, and disposes us to sacrifice every thing to the object beloved.

“ Which are the characters susceptible of such affections? Without doubt the most solid ones; those of the least outward shew; those which

“ unite together the best sense with the noblest
 “ mind, and most elevated sentiment.

“ What kind of men are the most formidable to a woman of this complexion? Those
 “ who possess no other shining qualities but
 “ what are sufficient to place social merit in its
 “ proper light *. Persons of this stamp are always dangerous company for a woman of
 “ thought and reflection. 'Tis true that they
 “ are very rare now-a-days, and that there never was, perhaps, an age more secure than
 “ the present, for defending us from the domination of extraordinary passions. But some
 “ chance, however, may unluckily throw such
 “ an adventure in one's way.

“ Moral philosophers agree, that we every
 “ one of us are born with a certain portion of
 “ sensibility, destined to be exercised upon some
 “ particular object or other.—Women of sense
 “ are not to be won by any of those trivial accomplishments, which captivate the generality of their sex. But when an object worthy of their attention presents itself, they
 “ quickly comprehend its intire merit. Their
 “ attachments are measured by the extent of
 “ their understanding.—They are incapable
 “ of middling affections. We should therefore keep clear of such female characters as
 “ these, and likewise avoid the acquaintance
 “ and converse of such men, as I have just described,

* The sense of this passage does not occur at first reading; but the meaning appears to be, that the most brilliant qualities are not often the most amiable; and that those, which without alarming, insensibly win upon the affections, have generally the surest effect.

scribed, if we would consult the ease of our hearts, and peace of our minds.

“ How then to frame a system of conduct which may procure us this two-fold advantage, at the same time,—to preserve ourselves from too deep impressions, and keep those persons at a distance, who are capable of inspiring them? Let us assume such an outward behaviour, as may at least, discourage men from exerting any of their most estimable qualities before us. Let us subject them to the mortifying necessity of attempting to win us by trivial address and drawing-room accomplishments; the ridiculous affectation of which may serve to supply us with shields against their assaults. What kind of intrenchment may we throw ourselves into, in order to stand covered by so many bulwarks? Even the shallow province of a *fine lady*.

“ You must, doubtless, be surprized at the singular result of such philosophic reasonings; but you will be much more so, when you shall hear me argue in form, to prove the justness of this resolve. Lend your ears a little longer patience.—I know the excellence of your judgment, nor do I think myself quite deficient in understanding, notwithstanding the frivolous character I have for some time sustained; and by the time I shall have finished my harangue, I flatter myself that we may both be of accord, upon this topic.

“ Do you imagine that an outward severity of manners can defend the heart from its foibles? Wretched resource! When a woman once becomes a victim to her weakness, she must be only the more humbled, in proportion to the character she had before attempt-

“ ed to impose upon the world. The higher
 “ pride she had placed in her virtue, the greater
 “ advantage she affords to malicious censure.

“ What ideas besides, do the world general-
 “ ly form of virtuous women? Are not men
 “ disingenuous enough to imagine, that the
 “ chasteſt woman is ſhe who can beſt conceal
 “ her weakneſs; or by a forced retreat puts it
 “ out of her power to ſall a ſacrifice to it? They
 “ carry ſtill their want of charity farther, ſo
 “ much afraid are they of admitting the leaſt
 “ kind of perfection in us, even to ſuppoſe that
 “ we continue in a ſtate of conſtant warfare
 “ with ourſelves, while we maintain any man-
 “ ner of ſtruggle with them. There never was
 “ a modeſt woman, ſays a certain friend of ours*,
 “ who was not weary of her condition.

“ And after all, what præmium is the reward
 “ of thoſe ſelf-denials they ſuppoſe we condemn
 “ ourſelves to? Do they raiſe altars to ſuch he-
 “ roic efforts? Not a ſingle ſod! The beſt cha-
 “ racter, according to them, is that which paſſes
 “ through life unnoticed †. That is, a perfect
 “ indifference on their part, and a profound ob-
 “ livion, is the higheſt price the world ſets up-
 “ on our virtue. Muſt we not have an inexhaus-
 “ tible ſtock, to preſerve it upon ſuch condi-
 “ ons?

* Rochefaucault.

† Pope ſays.

“ Moſt women have no characters at all.”——
 “ Matter too ſoft a laſting mark to bear;
 “ And beſt diſtinguiſhed by black, brown, or fair.”

Young alſo,

“ Their higheſt praiſe, to live and die unknown.”

“ ons? Might not such hard measure tempt one
 “ to decline the conflict? But there are some
 “ serious considerations, which demand our at-
 “ tention.

“ Dishonour treads close upon the heels of
 “ frailty. Age is wretched enough in itself.—
 “ What a state then, must it be, when passed in
 “ infamy and remorse! What price too high
 “ for an exemption. At first thought, I con-
 “ cluded that there was no other security from
 “ these ills, but by condemning one’s self to a re-
 “ tired and austere life, and I did not perceive
 “ my philosophy sturdy enough to encounter it.
 “ But upon farther consideration, I determined
 “ within myself, that the masque of a *fine lady*
 “ would be the best dress for a woman to appear
 “ in, who would reconcile pleasure and virtue
 “ together. By your smiling, I perceive that
 “ you look upon my proposition as a paradox;
 “ but believe me there is more consistency in it
 “ than one might at first imagine.

“ Is a *fine lady* required to have any attach-
 “ ment? Does any one expect tenderness or ten-
 “ sibility from her? ’Tis sufficient if she be but
 “ agreeable and accomplished in mere outward
 “ demeanour. If she carries herself with gayety
 “ and spirit, through the character she has ta-
 “ ken upon her to personate, who troubles them-
 “ selves whether she has a heart or no? Person,
 “ air, caprice, fashionable chat, frolic and par-
 “ ticular whims, are the only things expected
 “ from her. She may be as virtuous as she plea-
 “ ses, without interruption. Suppose a man
 “ should take it into his head to attack her; a
 “ slight resistance would quickly make him *raise*
 “ *the siege*: he would conclude the place to be
 “ already won, and wait patiently his turn.

" His perseverance might rather hurt him; it
 " would betray an ignorance of the deference
 " due to measures taken before his summons;
 " so that after an extraordinary manner, she may
 " owe her safety, merely to the ill opinion that
 " is conceived of her.

" I perceive by your countenance what you
 " are going to say,—That the character of a *fine*
 " lady might injure my reputation, and leave
 " me subject to those very inconveniences I
 " would avoid. Is not this your objection? But,
 " don't you know, Sir, that the most strict con-
 " duct may not be sufficient to screen us from
 " malice or slander? Men are generally the ar-
 " biters of our fame; and the good, as well as
 " bad opinions they frame of us, are often
 " equally false. Prejudice or accident deter-
 " mine their judgments; and our credit depends
 " frequently, less upon real merit, than on the
 " luckiness of circumstances. The hope of ob-
 " taining an honourable rank then, in their he-
 " raldry, should be the least part of our incite-
 " ment to a virtuous life: our first inducement
 " ought to be, the standing well with our own
 " minds, and to be able to say to one's self,
 " *Whatever may be the opinion of the world, I*
 " *have, thank heaven, nothing to reproach my own*
 " *heart with.* But after all, virtue is the *one thing*
 " *needful*, and the motives are very little ma-
 " terial.

" I remained convinced then, upon the
 " whole, that I could not conduct myself
 " more prudently, on setting out in the world,
 " than by putting on the vizard which I had
 " deemed fittest, both for my safety and repose.
 " I attached myself more closely, to the friend
 " who had assisted me with her counsels. This

" was

“ was the Marchioness de ———, my re-
 “ lation. Our conformity of sentiments and
 “ manners, was perfect; we frequented the
 “ same company: charity for our neighbour
 “ was not in truth, our favourite virtue. We
 “ entered the circle as the sole maskers at a
 “ ball; we trifled away our time there, and
 “ led others into the rendering themselves ri-
 “ diculous; and after we had sufficiently amus-
 “ ed ourselves with this farce, our entertainment
 “ did not end here; it was renewed again, when
 “ we retired together, to our dear *tête à tête*.
 “ How silly the women appeared, and what
 “ empty creatures the men! What fopperies,
 “ what impertinencies! If perchance, among
 “ the crowd, we happened to *détect* a person
 “ capable of making himself feared—that is,
 “ esteemed—we disconcerted him by our airs,
 “ by the slight notice we affected to take of
 “ him, and by the preference we seemed to
 “ give to those who merited it the least. In fine,
 “ in order to preserve our happy insensibility, we
 “ made constant choice of the most insignificant
 “ company we could pick up.

“ This conduct preserved us for a long time,
 “ from the dangerous shoals of love, and re-
 “ lieved us also, from that irksome tediousness
 “ of life, which a more formal and puritanical
 “ virtue would have subjected us to. Tri-
 “ fling, heedless, volatile—you may add coquet-
 “ tish, if you will, before the world; but se-
 “ rious, rational and virtuous in our own eyes,
 “ we compounded with ourselves for our out-
 “ ward character. The generality of men we
 “ met with, were not much to be apprehended,
 “ and those who gave us the least alarm, were

" obliged to play the fool, to be admitted or
 " accepted of in our society.

" However, there has at length happened an
 " adventure, which has brought me to suspect
 " the sufficiency of my scheme of conduct; for
 " I find that it has not been able intirely to
 " guard me from the danger I sought to shun.
 " My own experience has convinced me, that
 " love is an invader, who by surrounding us on
 " all sides, is sure to find some unguarded post
 " to make his entrance at: I know not by what
 " destiny the Marquis de Sevigné has rendered
 " all my projects fruitless: In spite of all my
 " outguards, he has surprized the avenues of
 " my heart. Whatever resources I have sum-
 " moned to my aid, he has had the fortune to
 " win over to his party, and my reason, instead
 " of assisting me in the conflict, has but betray-
 " ed me to the victor.

" I shall not, however, repine at his con-
 " quest, if he should not give me other cause to
 " lament it. He has won upon my weakness so
 " far, that I have not been able to conceal my
 " sentiments from him; and the only concern
 " I have at present, is lest he should imagine
 " that I have not hitherto, *personated* an insigni-
 " ficant character, but *performed* a real one.
 " And though my throwing off this disguise,
 " may perhaps render me less amiable in his
 " eyes,—for I do affirm, that superficial qual-
 " ities generally captivate men more than solid
 " ones,—I would, however, reveal myself to
 " him in my genuine character: For, I should
 " blush to owe his affections to mock appear-
 " ances, belying both my heart, mind and un-
 " derstanding.

" I am,

“ I am, Madam, replied Monsieur de la Sab-
 “ liere, still less surprized at the novelty of
 “ your project, than at the address with which
 “ you have been able to render so singular a no-
 “ tion plausible. I really think that it is im-
 “ possible to ramble with more method. But
 “ you have met with the general fate of pro-
 “ jectors, who take round-about ways to avoid
 “ the beaten track, yet fall into the same in-
 “ conveniences often, with the common high-
 “ road traveller. Now to make use of the pri-
 “ vilege you have allowed me, of speaking my
 “ opinion freely, believe me, Madam, that the
 “ best means of insuring our repose, is ever
 “ to act up, without disguise, to the character
 “ of a rational creature. One is always sure to
 “ be a gainer, upon any manner of composition
 “ with virtue.”

When I perceived the conversation begin to
 take this serious turn, I apprehended that it
 might be drawing toward a conclusion; and
 therefore hastily retired without being detected,
 and have given myself the pleasure of satisfying
 your curiosity, according to promise.

Did you ever see so long a letter? We shall
 return to Paris, in two days.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XXXII.

WELL Marquis, we are returned again,
 at last; but the *advices* we bring you,
 will be very far from welcome. You never in
 your life had a fairer occasion of accusing wo-
 men of caprice. My last letter was to assure
 you that we loved you mightily; and the pre-
 sent is to inform you of the contrary. We have

taken strange resolutions against you. Tremble — for it is a point determined.

The Countess, in short, is resolved to love you for the future, intirely at her ease, and without the least expence to her reputation or repose. She has foreseen the consequences of such a flame as yours, and cannot reflect upon them without terror. She has therefore, taken the pious resolution of arresting its further progress. Let not the proofs she has indiscreetly given you of her regards, flatter you with the least manner of hope. You men imagine that after a woman has once confessed her passion, she has lost the power to break her chain. You deceive yourself in this. The Countess is more mistress of herself in this particular, than perhaps you may imagine; and I own ingenuously, that to my friendly counsels she is indebted for some part of her firmness.

You must reckon no longer upon my letters, and in truth, you will not have much farther occasion for them, toward helping you to a thorough knowledge of women. I begin to repent me, that I have supplied you with too many arms already, against them; without which, do you imagine you would ever have won the Countess? I confess that I have hitherto, judged too severely of my sex, and here offer up my palinode*. I am truly sensible of my *libel*, at present. There are, I believe, among women, more real and essential virtue, than I had heretofore imagined. What a constellation of estimable qualities, is our charming friend possessed of! No, Marquis, I could not withhold from her my tenderest affections; and without the

* A classical term for a recantation.

the smallest regard to your interests, I have most cordially entered into the strongest alliance with her, offensive and defensive, against you.

You may resent my defection; but has not the confidence she has reposed in me, a right to claim the strictest fealty? I will not even conceal my treachery from you.—I have betrayed you so far, as really to apprize her of those very advantages you might possibly profit yourself of, from the secrets I have let you into of the female breast.

“ I perceive, said she, how formidable a lover is likely to be, who joined to a perfect knowledge of the heart, possesses at the same time, the engaging talent of explaining and expressing his passion, with address and sentiment. What effect may he not have upon a woman who reflects and discerns? I know it; 'tis by the assistance of her very understanding that he wins her. He has the art to employ her own wit against herself, to justify to her reason the errors he is betraying her into.

“ A mistress, besides, thinks herself bound to sacrifices in proportion to the merit of her lover. With an ordinary one a weakness is a weakness, and we blush for it; but with an extraordinary one, 'tis a tribute due to his desert; and is also a proof of our own discernment.—It compliments our taste, and we are proud to own it. Thus by adding to our vanity what is lopped off from virtue, we become quite insensible to the lapses of our own weakness.” These are at present, the cautious sentiments of the Countess, and I perceive

ceive not the least gleam of hope for you, dawning thro' them.

I acknowledge that it might have been better to have made these reflections between ourselves, without letting you at all, into the secret; and this was truly our first resolve. But could I act so disingenuous a part, to operate underhand against you? Would not this have been the height of perfidy? Besides, by so clandestine a proceeding, we might have betrayed some fear about the danger, and you see we have bravery enough to advise you of our very plan of defence. Come on then, Marquis; our expectation of the attack rises even to impatience.—Would you learn why? Because we can now attend your march, without a pulse-beat. Do not flatter yourself it is any longer, a tender mistress you have to cope with.—This would be too weak an adversary.—Such a courage is not much to be depended on. No——'tis me—a champion in cool blood, who thinks herself engaged in honour to support the weaker efforts of her friend and ally.—Yes—I can pry into the secret foldings of your heart, spy out its sinister aims, parry them, and render fruitless every artifice of your machinations. Accuse me of treachery, if you will; but come to us this evening, and I will convince you of the perfect equity and impartiality of my conduct, throughout this whole affair.

While your inexperience needed to be informed, encouraged and sustained, my zeal for your service induced me to sacrifice every thing to your interests. The Countess had, at that time, every advantage on her side. The complexion of affairs is quite altered. All her
pride,

pride, at present, is hardly sufficient to defend her. Formerly she had her own indifference, and what was still safer, your bad address, in her favour. You are now, a perfect master of gallantry; while she is scarcely mistress of—herself. In such circumstances, to have continued the war for you against her, betray the confidence she had placed in me, refuse her the succour she had a right to call for, if you have the least ingenuousness in you, would, by your own confession, have been a crying sin. I would then, for the future, repair the mischief I may have done in revealing our secrets, and initiating you into our mysteries.

I know not how it is, but I really feel such a pleasure in traversing your amour in this place, that one would imagine I had undertaken it from some self-interested view, of my own: but you know how far only, my pretensions upon you extend. My sentiments toward you shall ever continue the same; and on your part, I dare say that you are too candid, to suffer this activity for my friend to diminish the least of your esteem for me. Adieu.—Fly to the Countess now, you have free leave.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

WHAT, Marquis, a couple of women then, have frightened you! You despair at once, of success, because such redoubted Amazons have taken arms against you? See, see him flying from the field! Who would have taken him for so poor a soldier!

However, I must confess, that the firmness of the Countess, did even astonish me.—I was really surprized at the resolution with which she
with-

withstood for a whole evening, your vows, your protestations, and most earnest instances. For my part, I own, that I never beheld your address and manners so engaging; and she herself acknowledged to me since, that she never found you so formidable before. But I may venture to answer for her now, since her courage flinched not, on so perilous an occasion. My reflections carry me farther. The ease with which she supported her irony throughout, has almost brought me to suspect, that her heart has been but slightly grazed: had she been really wounded, she could not probably, have preserved so very cavalier an air.

In short, I have amused myself this morning, with a whimsical thought; that it would be ridiculous enough, if while we are diverting ourselves with your pains, you should discover that your tender Adelaide had conceived but a middling degree of liking for you. What a stroke to your vanity! What resentment at the disappointment! Though there are yielding fair enough to repair the loss.—How often will your pique cry out, “What is the heart of woman! Define the jilting composition who can.”

But after all, let me assure you that I have some compassion for you, and if I should find this matter having too deep an effect upon your mind, I cannot say what I may do to mitigate your misfortune. But I know your philosophy. The first transports of resentment over, you will soon perceive that the best card you have to play in this desperate game, is to restrain your passion within the common bounds of friendship; which is a condition that we now most generously tender you. What a happy composition is here, when your dismissal might have
been

been absolute ! However, do not plume yourself too highly, upon this advantage.—You might not have received such quarter if we had any farther danger to apprehend from you.

Adieu, Marquis.—The Countess, who is sitting by my side, says many kind things of you. She was particularly pleased with the complaisance of your late behaviour toward us. No longer to press an argument when two ladies appeared against you, was the very pink of courtesy and politeness, truly. Such extreme delicacy must surely in the end, disarm their opposition, and at length, excite their compassion. Hope;—this we have not yet prohibited you.

Postscript, from the Countess.

Though it should encourage the most flattering hopes in you, Marquis, I cannot resist the temptation of adding a few lines, at the bottom of my friend's letter. I have not read it, but suspect that I may be the subject of her epistle. I have a mind to give it you under my hand, that we shall pass this day alone together. I would acquaint you also, that though I have but a slight regard for you, at present, I shall every day, endeavour to render it less. However, if you have courage enough left, to break in upon our tête à tête party, I give you fair warning, that your danger will be great; for they flatter me that I am infinitely handsomer to-day than you ever yet saw me; and I can assure you that I never in my life found so strong a disposition in myself to use you abominably, as at this present writing.

In the mean time, Adieu. !
LET-

L E T T E R XXXIV.

THIS business begins now, to be rather serious, Marquis.—I insist upon an explication. Do you speak ingenuously in your letter, by hinting that you imagine I have been actuated in this affair, through jealousy only; and that I have endeavoured to interrupt your commerce with the Countess, merely to take some private advantage of the rupture?—You have either a very bad heart, or a most excellent head. The first, if you can possibly think me capable of such a double-dealing; and the latter, if you have but urged this charge, to create suspicion in my friend.

The alternative is equally injurious to me. The Countess has taken the matter seriously, and this embarrasses me to the last degree. You are really too many for us.—You know the ascendancy you have over her heart, and could not possibly have exerted it in a surer manner, than by putting on the appearance of indifference. Not to deign an answer to my last letter, to fail the assignation we made you under our hands, to remain three days without seeing us; and then to write us such a stiff, cold letter! I must acknowledge, Marquis, that all this is of a consummate politician,—'tis what is characterized under the common phrase of *un coup de maître*.

And accordingly, the most complete success has attended your hopes. The poor Countess! though she withstood your *warmth*, could not hold out against your *coldness*. The apprehension lest this indifference might be real, has
thrown

thrown her into the utmost inquietude. Come then, you Machiavel in love, come, and survey the work you have made. Come, and wipe off her falling tears.—Come, to triumph in your victory, and our defeat.

Gods! what is the most sensible woman in the world, when love has once taken possession of her heart! Why are you not here, a witness to the upbraidings she breathes out against me! For what cause, you'll say? Why truly, I have had it seems, in the first place, an injurious diffidence of her virtue; and in the second, a mistaken notion of your pretensions. I first supposed them criminal, and then took it into my head to punish you for them. I am severe, cruel, unjust, with many epithets more of the same kind, which she has heaped upon me.

What emotion! Well, take my word for it, that this shall be the last storm I will ever sustain for intermeddling between you; and let me here, most cordially renounce the confidence you have, each of you, hitherto honoured me with. We advisers truly, in such cases, stand a most admirable *lay* of it! They solely are charged with every thing disagreeable in the quarrel, and the lovers enjoy the whole pleasure of the reconciliation.

However, upon reflection, I think myself weak to have any manner of resentment upon this occasion. You are a couple of children whose waywardness ought rather to amuse me. I should regard you each with a philosophic eye, and continue still my friendship to you both. Come hither then, immediately, and acquaint me if you acquiesce in this resolve of mine. Come away, and drop the *petty tyrant*, for the present. Let us make peace, and frame a triple
alliance

210 MADAME DE
alliance together. My p
of them has such innocen
so secure in virtue, that t
sunder, would be a
justice.



L E T T E R

I S E E plainly, Marqu
preserve terms with
best understanding and w
love in their love affairs:
solution; and for the tim
mention your name to t
wrests it from me.—
However, this resolve
fect my sentiments tow
the friendship, I shall eve
though I remain her a
scruple to hold on my
the same free manner
tinue, since you pres
nions, upon every cir
shall propose to me: b
it; that I may not be
laughing sometimes, at

However, this privile
at present; for if the
resolution, which is no
not perceive that you
ford me much variety.
bers what I used late
her heart, and has rea
be a very imprudent w
fides in her own force

E DE L'ENCLOS TO

My poor dear infants ! One innocent views, and the other e, that to keep them any longer be a *cruelty* founded on in-

Farewel.

T T E R XXXV.

, Marquis, that the only way to ns with women, even of the g and virtue, is never to inter- affairs: I have taken my re- the time to come, shall never me to the Countess, unless she me.——I hate altercation.—— resolve shall not in the least af- ts toward you, any more than shall ever preserve for her. But n her ally, I shall make it no on my commerce with you, in nanner as usual ; and shall con- prefs it, to give you my opi- ery circumstance of life, you me : but upon this condition be not be denied the liberty of nes, at your expence.

s privilege I cannot make use of r if the Countess adheres to her sh is not to see you alone, I do at your affairs are likely to af- variety. She perfectly remem- ed lately to tell her: she knows has reason to fear it. She must dent woman indeed, who con- n forces, and dares expose her- self

ing himself at the feet of the Marchioness, her cousin. This choice is a rare encomium on his taste. But they were formed for one another. I shall be curious enough to know how far this hopeful passion may be able to carry them.

LETTER XXXVI.

YOU imagine, Marquis, that I do not perceive all the irony of those compliments you pretend to make me, on my *feigned* reconciliation, as I fancy you suppose it, with the Countess. But in reality, we had never fallen out. She soon made an apology for some hasty reflections, imputed them all to love, and intreated me to continue still my friendly counsels to her.

“ But, my good lady, what end will all my assistance answer, except to prepare a farther triumph for our antagonist! My opinion, in this *council of war*, is for quitting the field: for whatever confidence you may place in your own strength, flight only, can insure your safety.”

She imagines truly, that she has shewn an high instance of effort, in the last conversation she held with you. But all women speak to their lovers, after the same manner.—“ I rest satisfied with your heart, they cry; your sentiments and esteem are all the aim of my ambition. There are women, I am afraid, indelicate enough to accept most willingly, what I refuse. For my part, I shall never envy them their prize.” And so forth.

Take care, Marquis, how you reject these refined notions, openly. To seem to suspect their sincerity upon such occasions, would be more than

than unpolite, it would be indiscreet. You should applaud and encourage their error, if you would profit of it. They would appear delicate, and insensible to every other pleasure, but those of sentiment and intellect only. This is their system;—this their very soul. Some certainly there are, who impose upon themselves in these opinions; but in truth, the generality of them only endeavour to impose upon you.

But whatever may be their reason for equivocating upon these occasions, is it not a very happy thing, that they take the trouble of deceiving you, after this manner? What obligations should you not acknowledge to them? They give a value by this means, to the slightest favours, which without this artifice would bear no price. You should admire our address.—By pretending an indifference toward what you call the pleasures of love,—in carrying the affectation so far as even to declare an aversion to them, we augment the merit of those sacrifices we are supposed to make you. We thus render you grateful for the very obligations we are ourselves equally indebted to you for; and exact a tribute even from our conquerors. And since it has been decreed from the first, that we should still impose upon you, what acknowledgments do you owe us for choosing the most agreeable manner of doing so? We but cheat you to your gain; and multiply difficulties, only to increase your triumph. Anxieties and cares are but the purchase of your pleasures. How flattering to your vanity a pretence to boast,
 “ This fair one, so delicate of sentiment, so
 “ cold to all impressions of sense; so nice, so
 “ jealous)

" jealous of her fame; now sacrifices to me
 " her repugnances, her fears, and her pride.
 " My merit, my personal accomplishments,
 " my address, have won a fortress, impregna-
 " ble to all other assailants. *Io triumpho! Io*
 " *Peon!* What victory! What glory!"

But if women, on their part, acted ingenu-
 ously; were they as unguarded in declaring
 their sentiments, as you are assiduous in pene-
 trating them, you could not possibly make such
 a vain boasting to yourselves. What flattering
 pleasures would be at once destroyed! You
 ought never therefore to impute this reserve to
 them as a fault, from whence you reap such
 happy advantages. Feign rather to be imposed
 upon, nay assist the deceit, yourselves: It
 will but heighten and refine your pleasures.

If the Countess should happen to intercept
 this letter! what reproaches, what upbraidings
 should I again sustain!

Adieu.

LETTER XXXVII.

I Know well enough, that a man of your rank,
 especially a young officer, is frequently tempt-
 ed into bad company; and consequently, may
 sometimes be *arrested in his course*, by some of
 those *frens* you hint at in your letter*. How-
 ever, notwithstanding such excuse, you have
 not guessed amiss; for I should certainly have
 given you a severe lecture upon this occasion, if
 I was not persuaded that in the present situation
 of your heart, such *Circe's* cannot have magic
 enough

* The Opera girls.

enough to detain you long in chains from the sole object of your constancy *.

But the Countess resents it, you tell me; and I am not at all surpris'd at her jealousy; as it but confirms my general opinion of your *metaphysical* females. You may judge from hence, the sincerity of their professions. Their resentment is of a singular nature, surely.—For after all, what do these low-bred minxes rob them of? They have not the least idea of *sensibility*, and the Countess, to be sure, is nothing else, from top to toe.

Women are strangely inconsistent with themselves! They affect to despise these *mock-heroines*, but betray a certain fear, at the same time, that rises above contempt†. And, in reality, have they not reason to fear them? are you not better pleas'd with the familiarity of their converse, than with the company of women in higher life, where attention, respect, and strict decorum must be preserv'd? With the first, men are perfectly at their ease; they feel themselves in their natural state of freedom: with the latter, constrained, circumspect, and rehearsing, as it were, a part they never chuse to perform. From the characters I have had of some of these *familiars*, I imagine them very capable of rendering a man truant in some particulars, even to the woman he loves best in the world; but then this infidelity, if one may give it so harsh a name, is seldom carried farther, by
a man

* *Circe* was a sorceress, who detain'd *Ulysses* in his course, on his return to *Penelope*.

† View them with scornful, yet with jealous eyes.

a man of sense. They may excite a transient desire, but are incapable of fixing a permanent passion.

These *dramatis persone* might indeed, be dangerous society, had they either in their wit or manners, a fund sufficient to entertain you in the progress, as much as they do on the commencement of their acquaintance. A little common-place chat, readiness of address, and superficial breeding, take you in at first. Ye have not the least delicacy ! the freedom of their conversation, the liveliness of their manners, even the irregularity of their conduct, bewitch ye for the time ; a giddy, thoughtless transport possesses itself of your senses ; and thus ye dream whole hours away, as minutes.

But happily for you, they have seldom substance enough to support a material part : they generally want education and improvement, and consequently soon run the course of their narrow circle. The same stories, the same conceits, and the same mimickries recur again ; and one seldom laughs at the same jest twice, when some esteem for the person does not support the humour.

The Countess then, may be perfectly easy with regard to these galantries. I know you well enough to be answerable for it, that such mistresses can never be able to rival her. But, there are a certain sort of women, that may be truly dangerous to you, namely, your ladies of *clandestine* galantry. These are a kind of equivocal class in life, who hold a middle rank between women of character, and those I have been speaking of. They associate with the former, and differ from the latter, only in appearances. More free than fond, they impose
upon

upon your sex, by lending to sentiments the least refined, a certain air of passion, which is mistaken for love. They have the art of stamping an impression of tenderness, upon the vulgar appetite for pleasure. They would make you believe, that it is from choice, upon a thorough conviction of your extraordinary merits, they surrender. If you are not aware of their true character, you will find it difficult to distinguish the motives of their kindness, from a real sensibility of heart; and be apt to mistake for an excess of passion, what is only a fever of the senses. You flatter yourself that you are accepted as a lover, when you are but invited as a gallant.

These are the sort of women I should most suspect for supplanting the Countess. The *financier's** widow, who has been lately introduced into her parties, is of this character. I perceived it the first evening we spent together; and in your former letter, you hint at some lures she let drop before you. Had not the Countess reason to be alarmed at these advances? Your passion for this latter, I do really believe at present, to be strong enough to induce you to sacrifice every consideration to it. But how long may it continue so? The lady we are speaking of, is handsome, has gayety and spirit, and but just entered into that stage of life, when women willingly undertake the charge of young men, introduce them into the world, and teach them their first lessons of galantry.

That tender and attentive air, with which she receives and accosts you, may have its effect. Be on your guard: remember I give you warn-

* A receiver general of the French revenues.

ing. Men unawares attach themselves to such women, even while they are despising them; and they have the art, often to make ye do more silly things, than any other sort of women in the world.

Adieu.

LETTER XXXVIII.

I AM impatient to acquaint you, Marquis, that I have been just now supporting an argument, against Monsieur *de la Bruyere*. Don't you admire at my assurance? It is true for all that. He said that *Corneille* has drawn the characters of mankind, as they ought to be, and *Racine* such as they really are. I maintained the direct contrary opinion. We had a very critical audience at this dispute; and I carried the question, upon a poll. This, perhaps, I was not a little vain of. But the *pro* and *con* would take up too much of my letter. — Call to see me soon, and I may entertain you, perhaps, with both sides of the argument. Every one has their own manner of painting things, and I have mine among the rest. I sketch out women just as I find them, and am sorry I cannot represent them as they would pretend to be. But to your letter.

The kind of languor that oppresses you, does not surprize me. The indisposition of the Marchioness, has deprived you the opportunity of seeing her cousin; your heart has continued in the same situation, for three intire days: 'tis quite natural for such a circumstance to produce such an effect. Neither does the coolness you are sometimes susceptible of, toward the

Coun-

Countess, seem more extraordinary to me, than the former. In the fondest passions one is sensible, at times, of certain weary moments, which surprize even the persons themselves who are affected with them. Love has its *syncope's**, as well as other *diseases*. Whether the heart, fatigued with its own emotions, steals a refreshing nap; or that its attention is not steady enough for contemplating always the same object; it sometimes experiences its intervals of indifference, without being able in the least, to account for them. The stronger the *gust*, the profounder the *calm*: and this suspension, believe me, is often more fatal to love, than the very storm and tempest itself. This passion is extinguished by too strong, or too uniform a resistance. The generality of women have only one way of resisting: a woman of sense and cleverness does more:—she varies her mode of defence; and this is the very sublime of the art.

But the Countess, it seems, prefers the duties of friendship, to those of love; and this is a new reason for your coolness toward her. Love is a jealous and tyrannical sentiment, which is never satisfied, unless its object sacrifices to it every taste, every devoir, every passion. You have done nothing for it yet, while there remains still any thing more to be done. Prefer you duty, friendship, or any other social tie, but for an instant—it resents—it retaliates.

The forced compliments you pay to the *financiere*, are an instance of this unreasonable pique. I could wish, however, that you had not carried it so far as to attend her on her last visit to the

* A faintness, or intermission of pulse.

Countess. The time you staid with her there, the pleasure you appeared to shew in entertaining her, the questions she proposed to you with regard to the situation of your heart—these things, I say, prove the truth of my sentiments to you on this head, in my last letter.

You may pretend if you please, that all this flirting, has but the more confirmed your passion for the Countess; but your embarrassment when she asked you the next day, how long you had staid with the widow, when you escorted her home; the evasive answer you gave, and the pains you took to dispel her slightest doubts, sufficiently convince me that you are more guilty than you would acknowledge, or even than you really imagine yourself to be.

The Countess herself takes the affair in this light; for did you not observe the affectation with which she endeavoured to pique your love, by commending your old rival, the Chevalier? I may venture to promise for it, that you will not hastily fall back again into that lethargy you so lately complained of. Jealousy is preparing employment sufficient to keep you awake.

But how can you make so light of the poor Marchioness's misfortune! You will soon find, that the small-pox has not altered her face alone: her temper will partake of the change, believe me, as soon as her glass informs her how great it is. How much I pity her! But, pity her whole sex, at the same time! With what cordiality will she hate, and tear them to pieces! Your Countess is at present, her dearest friend.—How long will she continue so, think you? She is really, an extreme pretty woman, and has a complexion so apt to make others look like gypsies!

gypsies! What envious breathes do I not foresee!

I forgot to commence a serious quarrel with you, sir, for a piece of your ill behaviour toward me. You have had the indiscretion to shew most of my late letters to *Monsieur de la Rochefaucault*. I shall cease writing to you, if I find you cannot keep a secret. I speak my sentiments freely enough before him, in conversation; but one must be a good deal vainer than I am, who can flatter themselves that their writings may be able to stand the criticism of such a reader.

Farewel.

LETTER XXXIX.

THE redness, that the small pox has left upon the charms of the unfortunate Marchioness, mortifies her extremely. I am not surprized at her purpose of retiring to the country, for some time: she is not really, in a fit condition to appear abroad. If this humbling accident had not happened, the Chevalier might not perhaps have found the siege so easy to carry, as it is probable he had at first imagined. May not this serve to prove, that women's virtue generally depends upon circumstances, and diminishes always with their pride?*

But I am afraid of this example for the Countess. Nothing is more dangerous for a woman, than the frailty of her friend. Love, in itself already too alluring, obtains new vigour

* Here it may be observed, that Ninon's imagination is not at all phlegmatic. A slight matter serves her for proof. In this passage she supposes an event, and then reasons upon it, as a fact.

by contagion, if you'll allow me the expression. It is not from our hearts alone, it draws its forces: recruits are raised from many of the foreign objects that surround us. Guilty persons think it some screening of themselves, to lead others into the same snare. I am therefore, not at all surprized at the many kind things the Marchioness has lately said to her cousin, in your favour. Hitherto, they have both of them conducted themselves upon the same principles*. What confusion then, must it be to her, if the Countess alone should have reaped the benefit of them?

The Marchioness has besides, a further reason at present, more than another woman might have had, to contribute toward the defeat of her friend. She has lost her beauty, and may therefore be obliged, in order to preserve her lover, to make some condescensions, more than were requisite in her former state. Can she suffer, think you, that another should retain theirs, at a less expence? This would be submitting to a mortifying superiority: I am therefore convinced that she would run any length, to relax the moral of your charming *Adelaide*. Should she succeed? in good truth I tremble at the un-luckiness of circumstances! To have been once, as handsome as our friend—to cease to be so any longer, our rival's charms each day improving—yet still to be condemned to appear in contrast with her! Oh, sir! it is a trial, beyond our wisdom's strength! it baffles all philosophy! Among women, friendship cancels, or commences

* See the conversation of the Countess, with Monsieur de la Sabliere, Letter XXXI.

trances: rivalships. I mean the contest for beauty only—it would be too much to add that of passion also.

I foresee it with concern, but I must predict it to you. Whatever precautions the Countess may use, to sooth the misfortune of the Marchioness, she will make but an ungrateful return for. I don't know how it is, but every thing a pretty woman says upon such an occasion, to one who never was, or is no longer handsome, carries with it a certain air of compassion, which cancels all her kindness, and mortifies the person she would console. The more pains she takes to appear insensible of her own superiority over the unfortunate object, the more she confirms it; and seems to confess a *subaltern merit* in the other thro' charity, rather than the spontaneous will with which we usually acknowledge *inferior charms* *.

In truth, Marquis, women seldom deceive each other by the mutual compliments they pay. All of them know perfectly well, what rate to set upon civilities of this sort: so that as they speak without sincerity, they listen without gratitude: and should the female panegyrist be of the best faith in the world, in other particulars, the fair one whose beauty is praised, in order to judge of her veracity, attends less to her words, than her features. Is she homely? We believe, and love the flatterer. Near our own rank of beauty? We receive the compliment coolly, and disdain her. But, if handsomer—we hate her worse even than we did before. In short, believe me, that while the pre-eminence of charms remains

L 4

in

* Damn with *faint* praise, commend with civil *leer*.

in contest between two females, no perfect amity can ever be established. Can two merchants, who have the same goods lying on hands, enter into a strict friendship together?

For want of this hint, the real cause of the want of cordiality among women, has seldom been investigated. Those who appear the most fondly connected, often break off for the smallest matter. Was it this trifle, think you, that occasioned the breach? It was only the pretext. We conceal the true motives of our actions when the discovery may be to our disadvantage: we must never admit that the mortification, arising from our friend's beauty, had estranged us from her: this would be to betray our jealousy, our envy; and we would rather be deemed unjust, than yield our rival so high a triumph. Whenever two pretty women are so lucky to meet with the least plausible occasion, of *rid-ding themselves* of each other, they lay hold of it with so much eagerness, and hate one another so cordially, that one may easily judge what sort of an affection had subsisted between them before.

Well, Marquis, do I speak my mind freely enough to you? You see how far my sincerity carries me. I endeavour to give you just notions of every thing, and am not sparing even of my own expence; for I am certainly, not more exempt than another from the failings I describe. But as I trust, that all I have said will remain a secret between us, I am not afraid of bringing myself into a scrape with my sex, who would doubtless have great reason to resent my frankness. The Countess, however, is above such disguises, and honestly confesses the truth of my propositions.

How

How few women are there of this ingenuous nature !

Adieu.

L E T T E R XL.

THE example of the Marchioness then, has had no effect yet, upon the heart of her friend ? It seems on the contrary, that the Countess keeps rather more on her guard against you ; and has resented some slight freedoms you have lately indulged yourself in with her.

I was in hopes that on this occasion she would have reminded you of the former declarations of deference and disinterestedness, you made on the first overtures of your passion. This is the usual way in such cases. But what is very singular in this affair is, that the same earnestness, which a woman looks upon as want of respect, on the commencement of an amour, shall pass with her for a proof of love and esteem, after the completion of it. Listen to wives and mistresses, attend to their repining murmurs against careless husbands and lukewarm lovers : you'll find their complaints generally to be, that they have *lost their esteem* ; and they impute their coldness to this alone. But, among ourselves, what they imagine to be tokens of respect and esteem, are they not the very reverse of such sentiments ?

I have told you long ago, that women, would they honestly confess it, make love to consist in warm desire, even more than men do. Observe a mistress, on the commencement of her passion, and love is then an *idea*, purely metaphysical ; in which the senses have not the least manner of concern. Like the stoic philosophers, who in

the midst of torments would not confess their pain, she remains some time a martyr to her own system: 'till at length, love becomes triumphant, and nature will prevail.

After this, the lover would have much business truly, to play back her metaphysical theory upon her. "That this refined passion exists
"solely in sublime conceits, and spiritual inter-
"course: that it would be degrading its abstract
"and celestial nature, to impure it with any
"thing merely human or material," &c.

He may boast his superstitious reverence and devotion—in vain.—The preaching priest will never be admitted to sacrifice at our altars, believe me. His *respect* would be taken for affront, his *delicacy* for derision, and his *sine-spun barangues* for disingenuous evasions. All the credit he could expect, would be, that she may, perhaps, suppose his having had less delicate engagements with some other fair one, might have reduced him to the sad necessity of parading these chimera's before his *mistress—in name only*. And what is admirable upon such occasions, is, that the very apology they supply him with, proceeds from the same principle.

I see what deference you have for my commands: you have not only exposed my letters to Monsieur de la Rochefaucault, but you read them in public company. It is true, that the partial opinion of my friends upon them, makes me some amends for your indiscretion; and in truth, I think my best way is to proceed without reserve, as before. But at least, I hope you will have proper caution whenever I say any thing, in
which

which the honour of the Countess is concerned. Without this condition, you must expect no more letters from

NINON.

L E T T E R XLI.

NO, Marquis, say what you will, I cannot forgive you that extreme impatience, with which you press for what you stile your supreme felicity. Ignorant as you are, will you never be persuaded, that when you are secured of a woman's heart, it should be your chief pleasure to enjoy her defeat for some time, before you complete it? You are a perfect novice, if you do not know, that of all pleasures those of love require to be husbanded with the greatest œconomy. Were I a man, and had the fortune to win a heart, I mean such a one as the Countess's, with what parsimony would I use my advantage! How many gradations would I oblige myself to pass through, successively and slowly! How many delicate pleasures, unknown to the generality of men, would I, as it were, create to myself! Like the miser, I would incessantly contemplate my treasure, rejoice in the richness of it, be conscious that it constituted my highest felicity, place my whole scheme of happiness in the possession of it, in looking upon it as my own peculiar property, in being the absolute disposer of it,—and yet, strengthen myself in the resolution, not to lessen it by use! What transport to read in the eyes of a lovely woman, the dominion you have over her; to observe in all her actions relative to you, a still increasing tenderness; to perceive her voice assume a softer tone,
whene'er

whene'er she speaks of, or to you; to view her blushes, even upon a compliment of course, and to triumph in her confusion upon any particular address!

Can there be a situation on earth more flattering than that of a lover conscious of a reciprocal flame? And what surer proof can he require, than instances like these? How charming to be expected with an impatience that her whole prudence cannot conceal; to be received with a welcome which charms the more by the endeavours she makes in part, to hide her transport! She has dressed herself in your taste, takes the very mien, the accent, the whole air of person that is known to be most agreeable to you. Before, she used to adorn herself to charm your sex in general. At present, her toilette is spread for you alone. For you these jewels, this ribbon, that bracelet, are put on. You the sole object of her whole attire. You are become her second self. She loves you o'er again, in her own image!

Can there, even in love, be a more enchanting scene, than the faint reluctance of a yielding fair, supplicating you not to take advantage of her weakness,—reduced to owe her very virtue to you? In a word, can any thing be more bewitching, than a voice faltering with emotion, than those denials, for which she seems almost to reproach herself, and softens the rigour of by the most tender regards, even before they are complained of?

How can you suffer such enchantment to be dissolved? For my part, I cannot conceive it: and yet, when your hasty wishes shall be accomplished, these truly delicate pleasures diminish in proportion to the facility of your victory.

tory. It remained in your power to prolong, to augment them, in affording yourself leisure to contemplate, and enjoy the refined and superior sweetness of them.

But you are never satisfied 'till the possession is absolute, easy and uninterrupted; and yet, are afterwards surprized, to find your hearts affected with indifference, coldness and inconstancy. Have you not done every thing in your power to cloy yourself with the desired object? How often have I told you that love seldom dies of *hunger*, but frequently of *satiety*?

At some other time I shall make you a confident of my amour with *de Villarceaux*; and you may thence instruct yourself after what manner one should conduct a passion to make it lasting. You may then be able to judge whether I understand the human heart, and have a true taste for the refinements of pleasure. You will learn from my experience, that an economy of our passions is, perhaps, the only rational *metaphysics* in love. You will, in fine, perceive from hence, how little consideration you have for your choicest interests, in your present impatient conduct toward the Countess.

But, to baffle all your schemes, I shall be frequent in my visits and counsels to her. Now do not put on a *long face*, and reproach me with playing a double part, between ye; for in reality, according to my notions, I act equally for the advantage of both parties. Farewel.

L E T T E R XLII.

IPITY you, Marquis? Not I, truly. You never govern yourself by my counsels, and I am not sorry to see you suffer for it sometimes. You

You thought it was now high time to advance your familiarities with the Countess. The unreserved way she speaks of love, the easiness of her manners, and ready forgiveness of your many indiscretions, the frankness of her rallying the *Platonists*—all these, I say, had led you into a presumption that the severity of her morals might have been considerably abated, of late. But experience has shewn you the ignorance of your error; and all this *external* freedom you will find to be only an alluring and political artifice.—But then—to abuse your simple-hearted, plain dealing folk, after such a manner! This, most ungenerous treatment, truly! and merits all the resentment that can possibly be shewn, upon so justifiable an occasion!

Now, shall I speak to you with my usual ingenuousness? You are fallen into a mistake, which is but too common with your sex. They rarely judge of us, but from outward appearances: they imagine, that every woman who does not hold her virtue constantly in armour, may become an easier conquest, than a prude; nor does even experience convince them of their error. By which means, they expose themselves often to severe repulses, which are therefore the more mortifying, as the least expected from that quarter.

Their *reprise* then, is to accuse us of jilting, and caprice. Ye all cry out with one voice,
 “ Why such equivocal proceedings? If a wo-
 “ man is determined to remain inexorable, why
 “ should she cruelly amuse the hopes of her
 “ lover? Should there not be a conformity be-
 “ tween your sentiments and actions? In fine,
 “ is it not ungenerous to suffer us to love you
 “ still,

“ still, while you dispense with yourselves for a
 “ return? Is not this a disingenuous——nay, a
 “ dishonest conduct? Is not this to make a mock
 “ of love and sentiment?” &c.

No, gentlemen——it is only making a *mock*
 of your vanity.——You, doubtless, bring a heavy
 charge against us; but after all, it is we in
 reality, who are the most equivocated with: for,
 do you mention *sentiment*, only to ennoble a passion
 which is the least *sentimental* of any?

Besides, is it not yourselves who lay us under
 the necessity of playing this game? If a woman
 has even the slightest knowledge of your sex,
 she must know that the strongest——the only
 tie over your affections, is hope: she ought
 surely then, to supply constant food to your ex-
 pectations. Should her deportment but once
 assume an invincible air.——No more hope——
 No more lover. What a forlorn state! what
 an humble condition! For let a woman’s virtue
 be ever so severe, her heart is never thereby
 rendered less sensible to the desire of pleasing;
 nor does her glory consist less in attracting your
 homage and adorations.——But, well knowing
 that those from whom they expect them, tender
 their devoirs from motives that mortify their
 pride; and not being able to rectify this *vulgar*
defect, they employ their whole art in taking a
 safe advantage of it, and still preserve their ad-
 mirers by suffering those hopes to subsist, which
 they never mean to fulfil.

If they happen to have address they succeed
 in their scheme; and if a woman has the least
 knowledge of her true interests, she will revolve
 to herself what the Countess said to me, in our
 last conversation together. “ I know well what
 “ sort of value to set upon the *I love you* of
 “ men,

“ men, and thoroughly comprehend the full
 “ scope of their protestations. It is therefore
 “ my own fault if I suffer myself to be imposed
 “ upon by them. And indeed, after one has
 “ comprehended their design, our pride alone,
 “ one should fancy, might be sufficient to dis-
 “ concert their views. Resentment, when
 “ their behaviour provokes it, is not the best
 “ shield we can take up against them. Who-
 “ ver is reduced to call in foreign aid, and sum-
 “ mon anger to their assistance, betrays the
 “ poverty of their own resources. A fine iron-
 “ y, a smart raillery, or a mortifying slight,
 “ are more effectual discouragements. Let
 “ there be no quarrels, and there will be no
 “ occasion for reconciliations; which always
 “ gain some ground. What advantages will
 “ not such a conduct deprive them of!

“ Prudes, indeed, take quite another method.
 “ Make but the least attack upon them, and
 “ they are up in arms, at once; as if the cre-
 “ dit of their chastity was to rise, in proportion
 “ to the height of their resentment. But, what
 “ is the effect of so much starchness? *Men of*
 “ *the world* are apt to say, I might not have
 “ sustained this repulse, had I not ill-timed my
 “ attack. It is my indiscretion, and not my
 “ assurance, that is rebuked. At another con-
 “ juncture, the crime of to-day might perhaps,
 “ be the merit of to-morrow. Her present re-
 “ sentment is a hint to watch a more *critical*
 “ *minute*, when I may probably obtain more in-
 “ dulgence, and disarm her pride. I must ap-
 “ pease her wrath; and the surest way of ma-
 “ king her forget this offence is, in the instant
 “ of forgiveness, to offend again. This, I say,
 “ may be their reasoning with these *outrageously*
 “ *virtuous*;

“ *virtuous*; but in my manner of treating such
 “ impertinence, they can never make use of
 “ this method of argument.*

“ The Marquis, for example, has sometimes
 “ betrayed his *respectful* intentions, by his eyes.
 “ I used but one method, upon these occasions;
 “ —I have seemed to take no notice of it, and
 “ insensibly gave a turn to the conversation,
 “ which drew his attention upon other objects.
 “ This address served me extremely well ’till
 “ the last time we were together; and then in-
 “ deed, there was no farther dissembling with
 “ him. He would have *honoured* me with some
 “ freedoms, which however, I quickly put a
 “ stop to; but without anger. I thought it
 “ better to defend myself by reason, than by
 “ passion. I appeared rather mortified than
 “ provoked; and I am certain, that my concern
 “ affected him more, than the highest resent-
 “ ment could have done. He retired on the
 “ instant with a desponding air.—But now,
 “ to see what stuff the heart is made of! In the
 “ first moments I feared I had lost him for ever
 “ —I almost repented me of my cruelty—
 “ I thought I had carried my politicks too far.
 “ But a little reflection reassured me again.
 “ Has coyness ever created inconstancy?”

In short, Marquis, we talked upon this sub-
 ject, ’till we were both of us out of breath.—

And,

* A friend of mine, reading this passage, resembled
 prudes to dwarfs in armour, who if the fight was continu-
 ed for any time, are apt to sink under the weight of their
 own accoutrements. And added, that the difference be-
 tween these *virtuoso*’s, and such as the Countess, might be
 compared to charioteers, who preserve their seat, by sitting
 free and easy in it. These who fix themselves stiff, are
 liable to be thrown out by a jolt.

And, if I can answer for woman, I think your Countess stands upon *firm ground*. You may exclaim aloud against her unkindness; call her capricious and unjust. But no pleasures of love for her, that are to be purchased at the expence of her pride. This is her absolute resolve; and she has, believe me, strength sufficient to support it.

The loss of your heart would, I really think, be a misfortune she might feel with regret, perhaps her whole life. But, on the other hand, the conditions you impose on the preserving it, are a great deal too severe. She would compound this business with you. She hopes to fix your *regards*, without remitting *those* she owes herself. This is a project worthy of her spirit; and I hope it may succeed better with her than the one she formed before to guard her heart from love. We must attend the event.

Shall we meet you to-morrow, on our intended visit to the president's widow? If you have any thing to say to us, you may take this opportunity of making your peace.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XLIII.

I NEVER expected it, Marquis.—But I find that my good will to serve you, is to be paid with reproaches only; and I am, it seems, to take share with the Countess of that ill humour her coyness has thrown you into. Do you know now, that tho' what you say had had any foundation, nothing could have mortified me more than the ironical tone with which
you

you pretend to compliment me upon my principles of philosophy.

But your making me responsible for your success in this amour, diverts me extremely. Have you taken it into your head that my design in these letters was to give you lectures on seduction? Do you make no difference between teaching you how to please, and instructing you how to *delude*? 'Tis true I explained to you the physical cause of love, both male and female; but did I ever say that women were therefore the more easily won? Did I ever advise you to attack them by the senses; or suppose them to be void of delicacy or sentiment? I appeal to my letters——You say you have them all——I defy you to produce a single paragraph, to that purpose.

While your inexperience and bashfulness suffered you to appear in an awkward light before women, I remarked to you the disadvantages this might subject you to, in your progress thro' life. I then advised you to assume a little more spirit and confidence, in order to inspire you by degrees, with that easy and liberal address which becomes a gentleman in a polite commerce with women. But, when I found that you carried your pretensions too far, and were likely to affect the honour of the Countess, I confess honestly, that I took part against you. It was very proper I should do so: I was then, become her friend.

You may see then, how unjust your charges are against me; and I really think that your opinion of her is as much so. You speak of her, as one of an equivocal character; as a woman who is neither determined for nor against galantry; and then peremptorily conclude, that
she

she is only a coquette of an higher class than ordinary.

What a judgment have you framed? But one must make allowances for the present perturbations of your mind. A dispassionate, unprejudiced person might perhaps, have perceived the Countess to be a mistress full as chaste as tender;—a woman not professing the *show*, but possessing the *substance* of virtue. Finally, an amiable fair, whom honour and prudence have inspired with the most proper conduct to conciliate her love for you, and her duty to herself, together.

The difficulty of blending these repugnancies into one system, is not inconsiderable; and this is the source of that inequality of behaviour which perplexes you in her.—Imagine to yourself, the struggles she must sustain, the varying modes of her defence, and the inconsistencies that must unavoidably appear in her actions, who would endeavour to preserve a lover whom too continued a resistance might deprive her of.

There is no keeping a steady conduct with you men.—You are so very impatient that you fly off frequently, upon the slightest opposition. You do honour to our virtue, but abandon us at the same time. And what a disgrace is this! How many women have sacrificed themselves to prevent such a mortification! But since in neither case, one is sure of preserving the lover, we ought certainly to prefer that method which may at least intitle us to his affections and esteem.

This is *our* opinion.—For the Countess and I have discussed, and agreed this point between us. Shew then more equity, Marquis.—Pity, rather

rather than condemn her. If her character had been more remiss, you would perhaps, have liked it better.—But would you do so long? Not you, truly.—Adieu.—We reckon upon your company this evening, at Madame de la Fayette's, and hope to meet you there in a more rational humour.

To-morrow, the Abbé de Gedeine is to be presented to me. I am to have a most brilliant assembly. Will you come? But I know how insipid it must be to you, as the Countess will not be with me.—You would say of my apartments, what *Malherbe* has of the gardens of the *Louvre*:

In vain you boast your charms, your beauties rare!

I see them not——*Calista* is not there.

L E T T E R XLIV.

A CALM has at length succeeded to your storm, Marquis; and I perceive from your letter, that you are at present, better pleased with the Countess, even than you are yourself. What an additional force does reason obtain, in passing thro' ivory teeth, and ruby lips!

Observe the different effects of the different conduct of the two cousins. The coyness of the one has augmented your esteem, and confirmed your love: while the kindness of the other has rendered the Chevalier faithless. Such is the nature of man! and ingratitude the reward of our favours!

This misfortune, however, may possibly be prevented——And I shall upon this occasion, . . .
com-

238 MADAME DE L'ENCLOS TO

communicate to you part of a letter, I have lately received from Monsieur de *St. Evremond*. — You know the constant correspondence we have always held together.

The young Count de — some time ago, married Mademoiselle de —, of whom he had been most desperately enamoured. Soon after, he lamented to me that marriage and possession should too generally weaken, nay frequently extinguish, the fondest, the most tender passion. We disserted a good deal, upon so interesting a subject; and as I happened to write, the same day, to *St. Evremond*, I proposed the *thesis* to him; and I send you the answer I received, in his own manuscript.

Monsieur de St. EVREMOND
To Mademoiselle de L'ENCLOS.

My sentiments agree perfectly with yours, madam. It is not always, as it is commonly imagined, either matrimony or enjoyment, that, of themselves, diminish or destroy this passion. The little discretion with which we husband our affections; too absolute, too easy, too uninterrupted a possession; these are the real sources of those *weanings* and disgusts, which arise so frequently in love.

When we surrender ourselves up without reserve, to all the excesses of a passion, these extraordinary transports are apt suddenly to subside, to leave a cloyed satiety upon the mind, and suffer the heart to become sensible of a listless vacancy of sentiment, and chilliness of affection. In vain do we seek, out of ourselves, the causes of that calm which succeeds our strongest emotions. Nor do we see that a more equal

equal and lasting pleasure, had been the consequence of a little moderation.

Examine closely, into the movements of your mind when you wish for any thing, and you will find, that your desires arise solely, from a fondness for variety. The love of change is the very *diasolé* of the heart *. Satisfy our curiosity, and our wishes faint away. Whoever then, would fix a husband, or a lover, should still leave them something to desire: each day should promise something new or rare, for the morrow. Diversify his pleasures; exhibit in the same object, the quickning spirit of variety, and I will answer for his fidelity and constancy.

I acknowledge, indeed, that marriage, or what is stiled your *defeat*, is in common life, the sepulchre of love: But then, it is less to the lover, than to the fair one who complains of this mortality, that the defeat is to be imputed. She objects to the corruption of the heart what is but the natural consequence of her mal-address, and indiscreet œconomy. She has expended at once, what would have maintained a passion for life: She has reserved nothing new to amuse the expectations, the curiosity of her lover. Like a fixed statue she excites no desires; and her whole *role* he has already by heart.

But with a woman, *such as I have at present in contemplation*, it is the dawn of a fair summer's day: not a hasty snatch of transient joy, but a stated course of permanent pleasures; of those disclosures of the heart, those mutual confidences, which charm the soul; those ingenuous

* Its dilatation or expansion; which gives a free circulation of the blood thro' the whole animal œconomy.

genuous confessions, which escape our lips; those transports, which are excited in our breasts, by the consciousness of constituting the whole happiness, and meriting the intire affections, of the person beloved.

This day, in a word, is an æra, when a man of refined sentiment, will begin to find out inexhaustable treasures, which till then had been modestly concealed from him. The freedom a woman acquires upon such occasions, suffers her to display that wit, that sense, and those talents, which restraint and reserve had kept from a stranger to before. Her soul begins now, to take a *flight*, but soaring still under command of the *lure* *. Thus time, so far from inducing indifference or disgust, but rather multiplies reasons for still increasing love.

But then we must still suppose, that this same woman shall have government enough over her passions, to keep her affections ever under command.—For to preserve a lover, it is not enough—or rather it is too much—to love him to excess. She must know how to parcel out her fondness, by *retail*—not heap it upon him, by *wholesale*. And for this very purpose, modesty is perhaps, the most ingenious device, that could possibly have ever been imagined, by the wit and delicacy of mankind.†

But, to deliver herself up so intirely to her passion, to annihilate herself, as it were, in the presence

* A metaphor borrowed from falconry.

† This is one among the many passages interspersed throughout these writings, which afford admirable hints to our sex. Modesty is certainly the surest charm, to win or wear a lover; *be he delicate, or be he not*. What has been said of honesty, may be affirmed of this quality, also; that it is the *best policy*, even supposing virtue, character, and decency, out of the question.

presence of her lover, is the part of a mere novice in the science. This is not *to love*—'tis *to languish*—and to suffer the passion also, soon to do so too.

I would have a woman conduct herself with better œconomy and address. The greatness of her fondness does by no means justify her. The heart is a fiery courser, whose mettle should be restrained. If you manage not his forces with horsemanship, his spirit will but the sooner jade him. The same lukewarmness that you perceive in the lover after these extraordinary transports, you will also be sensible of in yourself; and you will, both of you, in a short time, find yourselves equally inclined to quit the irrecoverable game. In fine, it requires more genius to love, and to increase and prolong the happiness of loving, than is too generally imagined.

'Till the moment of the fatal *Yes*, on whatever terms granted, a woman has but little need of artifice, to preserve her lover. Curiosity excites, desire impels, and hope sustains. But when once success has crowned the adventure, she is called upon to use as much pains to preserve her lover, as it cost him to win her. It requires that the desire of fixing him should inspire her policies; for the heart is like an open town, easier to take than keep.

Beauty is sufficient to win our love; but to insure our constancy something more is necessary. There must be sense, address, cleverness, and a certain *quickness of spirit*. But unhappily, when they have once ceded the question, they become too tender, they even prevent our wishes. It would be better, for our mutual advantage, were they less coy before, and

more reserved after.——I must repeat it.—
There is no way to postpone disgust, but by
leaving the heart at leisure to form its wishes.

I hear them continually complaining, that
our indifference is generally the consequence of
their compliances; eternally reproaching us
with the times when whole summer suns roll-
ed unperceived away in their company. Fruit-
less chiding! 'Tis upon themselves, not on us,
they should call, to restore that happy and re-
gretted æra. Let them forget the favours they
have already granted, and they will not labour
to exceed them. Let them suffer us to forget
them, and we shall exact the less. Let them
rouse our affections by new difficulties; let our
solicitudes revive——in a word, suffer our
doubts still to require fresh proofs of a passion,
the certainty of which so much abates the value.
Thenceforward, they will have less to complain
of in us, and more to be satisfied with in them-
selves.

I tell it to you frankly,——the scene would
be quite shifted, if women would constantly
bear in mind that their *rôle* was always to re-
ceive petitions——ours, to supplicate and earn
new bounties. That made to *grant*, they ought
never to *give*. Reserved, even in the excess of
passion, they should not yield themselves up to
it without controul. Leave the lover always
something farther to desire, and he will be still
obsequious to obtain it. Full compliances render
the most bewitching charms of none effect,
and soon disgust the very person who exacts
them. This is not a speculative *problem*, but a
truth of confirmed experience.

Possession places all women on a level. The
homely and the fair, after their conquest, have
no

no difference between them, except the art of preserving still our hearts. But what is commonly the case? A woman thinks she has nothing farther to do than to be submissive, fond, mild, even tempered, and faithful. So far indeed, she judges right, that these qualities should be the foundation of her character; they will secure our esteem: but valuable as they are, if not seasoned with a spice of humour and caprice, they will suffer the flame to languish, *for want of air*, and a certain weariness and langour to obtain.—Mortal poisons to the best constituted hearts!

Do you know, in fine, the reason why lovers are so soon tired of prosperity, and why women please so little after having been pleased so much? 'Tis because both parties have, each of them, an opinion equally false. One imagines that there is nothing more to gain; and the other, that there is nothing more to give. Upon which notion, the one slackens his pursuit, and the other neglects to exert herself; or at best, confines her exertion within the province of substantial merits. They substitute reason and esteem for passion. Then farewell the quickening salt of love: Adieu the hale-some gales of jealous altercation, which purge the stagnant lake of subsided affection.

But, when I say that the *dead calm* of a fond commerce, should be sometimes *ruffled by breezes*, you will not, I hope, imagine that I would have two lovers spend their lives in squabbles together. I would have their piques, their expostulations, to arise from the delicacies of love alone; that the fair one should never, from pusillanimous acquiescence, remit those deferences and regards, which she has both a natural,

and a purchased right to: that from too tender a sensibility, she would not make of love a source of inquietudes to embitter all her days: that by too scrupulous a conduct she would not leave the lover in too great security that he has nothing to apprehend, from that quarter: in fine, that she should never, from too easy and even a disposition, have the weakness to pardon, or pass by, every deficiency of respect and attention, which too secure lovers are apt to be careless about. Experience often proves, that women lose the hearts of their husbands or lovers, by an excess of indulgence, and of remissness. How weak a conduct! They make a merit of sacrificing every thing to them; they spoil, and render them ungrateful. Too much bounty turns against themselves at last; for by use, they begin to look upon that as their right, which was at first accorded them only as a favour.

Have you not known women, even among the most despicable of their sex, to govern with a rod of iron, treat like vassals those unfortunate persons who happened to fall under their power, rendering them contemptible to the eyes of the world by the usurped and arbitrary sway they bear over them. And yet, are not these the wives and mistresses who generally the longest maintain their empire! I know that a woman of sense, breeding, or moral, will never frame her conduct upon such unseemly examples as these. So militant an air is repugnant to the softness of feminine manners, and contrary to that propriety and decency, which make the charm, even of those things which lead them aside from virtue. But midway between the termagant and milk-sop, may perhaps be found the class of women the fittest to go-

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vern us, both for the continuance of our happiness, and of their own. We are a sort of slaves that too much lenity renders insolent; and we frequently require to be treated like those in America—with discipline and chains. We have in our minds a certain innate notion of justice, which informs us, that the hand which rules us may fall heavy upon us sometimes, with reason; and we therefore acquiesce without a murmur.

To conclude—In every thing that falls within the province of love, women ought to be our absolute sovereigns. 'Tis from their hands alone we are to receive our happiness and pleasures. And they will infallibly supply our lives with both, when they shall have learned to manage our affections with judgment, to moderate their own with discretion, and to maintain their sway without *exposing* or abusing it.

St. Evremond.

LETTER XLV.

IN two words I will answer you, Marquis. In order to profit of the counsels of St. Evremond, a woman must have excited a strong passion in her lover, and have conceived but a slight one in herself. As to the rest, we shall discuss those points at a more leisure interval. I proceed now to your own concerns.

The sacrifice that the Countess has required from you, deserved well the price you have set upon it. To quit a woman for her who by her whole behaviour toward you has declared herself willing to accept you, upon your own terms—to renounce her publicly, in the very,

presence of her rival; and with so little saving to the pride of the forsaken fair, was really an effort which merited the highest recompence. She could never have framed a better pretence for making you a present of her picture.

But to fix upon so signal an occasion as the day the Marchioness received her first visits; to chuse a time when the low *cit* had the vanity and presumption to put on all her attractions, and dispute the prize with a *woman of quality*; to speak to her only, *en passant*; to appear wholly wrapt up in the pleasure of seeing her rival, to entertain her apart, and to form all her parties——This is an outrage that can never be forgiven; and the *financiere*, depend upon it, will never be at peace within herself until she has taken ample vengeance for so mortifying an affront.

Now to the second article of your letter. You interrogate me whether *the last favour*, or rather, *the last fault*, be a convincing argument of a woman's love. Ay——or No?

Yes——if you happen to be her first passion; and that she has either delicacy or virtue. But even in this case the proof is neither more certain, nor more flattering, than the many lesser tokens of her fondness she must have suffered to escape her before. Every thing that is said or done by a woman who truly loves, even the most insignificant to common apprehension, are full as sure marks of passion, as those which you make such a rout about.

I may also add, that if even this woman should happen to be of *a certain complexion*, the last favour may be rather a lesser proof of her passion, than many other sacrifices or condescensions which perhaps might have been deemed
of

of too small moment to be made account of. For, in that instance, she might have considered herself, more than you : She may have had so much interest, in complying, as to leave you nothing to be vain of, in persuading. Any other in your place, might have had the same success.

I knew a woman once, who had been overcome, two or three times, by persons whom she had no particular liking to, while the one she really loved had sighed and sued in vain. It may therefore happen, that the last favour shall not prove any thing in the *thesis* you propose. On the contrary, a man may obtain it sometimes, from a woman's indifference toward him. We never respect ourselves so highly, as before those we esteem ; and it must therefore require a stronger degree of passion to hurry a woman of any sentiment, into a breach of decorum before one whose good opinion she sets account by. Your boasted triumphs then, may frequently arise from motives, which far from satisfying your pride, might mortify your vanity to the last degree, were they but ingenuously confessed.

One perceives, for example, a lover slacken in his addresses, on resistance. One fears his elopement to throw himself at the feet of some kinder fair. Care for him or not, one cares not to lose him. It is always humiliating to see one's self forsaken. One yields, merely for want of knowing any other method of staying him. The fault should not lie at her door : If he quits her after, the blame be his. For as women attach themselves more strongly by the very favours they bestow, they are led into a vain notion, that surely gratitude should form

a closer tye, on the receipt of them. Silly novices!

Others comply from various motives; curiosity determines one; she would know what love is. Another, on defect of the charms of beauty, would attract by those of pleasure. A third, has conceived an ambition to attach a man whose *devoirs* may flatter her vanity; and sacrifices every thing to this principle. Others may yield thro' compassion, opportunity, importunity, resentment to a faithless lover, &c. —But enough.—In short, the heart is so capricious, and the reasons which determine it so whimsical and various, that it is impossible to enumerate all the springs that govern its motions. But, if we are apt to mistake the means of fixing ye, ye are also as often deceived with regard to the proofs of our passion. Was there any delicacy among your sex, they would perceive tokens of our fondness, in many things more than our most signal favours.

Tell me, Marquis, what have I done to Monsieur *de Coulanges*? He has not come near me this month past. Tho' in my own defence I must say, that I always received him with the highest politeness. He is one of the most agreeable men I know. I shall be angry if you do not bring him to see me on my return from *Versailles*. I long to hear him sing the last ode he has composed; they say it is extremely fine.

Adieu.

L E T-

L E T T E R XLVI.

YOU are extremely polite, Marquis, in your expressions upon my absence. If I have not written to you since my coming to the country, it was because I thought I had left you in a most prosperous situation; and this consideration rendered me quite easy about you. Besides, I thought that love should be indulged in all its rights, as its empire is generally so short. And as friendship is a quite different province, I waited patiently 'till some interval of pleasure might afford you leisure to attend to my correspondence.

Do you know how I was employed, all the while? I amused myself with combining the events which must naturally arise from the situation of affairs in which I left your little society. I knew the arts of the Countess against her rival, and concluded that an open rupture must be the consequence of them. I foresaw that the Marchioness would take part, rather with the latter; for the *financiere* is not quite so handsome as the former, which must have been a decisive argument for declaring in her favour, as this alliance leaves her in less danger of an *eclipse*. I knew that all this would terminate in a squabble, among the women; but throughout this revolution I am glad to find that your good fortune still maintains its ground.

Every day will supply you with new reasons for loving and esteeming your charming Countess. A woman of such real merit and so engaging a figure, must win upon you in proportion to your acquaintance with her. Let nothing.

thing weaken your attachment to her. You have, 'tis true, obtained a confession of her passion toward you. Is she the less estimable upon that account? Ought it not rather to augment the value of a prize, every degree of certainty you acquire of your being the sole possessor? Nay, should she even yield you the *last proof*, which was the subject of a late letter, ought this to lessen your esteem?

You'll excuse my freedom, but I cannot help saying, that the *happy* of your sex, too often betray a most unmanly meanness of sentiment, breeding, and moral, in their conduct toward the *unhappy* of ours. Their narrow souls make no distinction between a *weakness*, and a *vice*; and punish for *misfortunes*, as for *crimes*. What height of depravation, to add insult to perfidy! Can they not become inconsistent, without being unjust, also? Were it not enough that *apathy* succeed to *passion*, but must *disgust* pursue *desire*? Even were she *criminal*, is it the *receiver*, the *accomplice*, that should inflict the penalty? A *banditti* would behave with more justice, with more honour. They ne'er *betray*—they ne'er *impeach*—except to save a life.

Preserve then your sentiments for the Countess, intire to the end; nor ever, let your event be what it may, suffer a false opinion to interrupt the progress which her merits must naturally make, both in your affections and esteem. It is not their *defeat*, in itself, which ought to render women despicable. The manner in which they defend, surrender, and conduct themselves after, should be the sole rule of those judgments the world has a right to form, either of *compassion*, or *contempt*.

Madame

THE MARQUIS DE SEVIGNE. 251

Madame *de la Fayette*, you say, seems to think that my last letter was on too free a subject: You see what censures your indiscretion has laid me under. But she did not consider, that I was no more culpable in that particular, than a lecturer in anatomy. I analyze the *moral*, as he dissects the *natural* man. Would you not think him too scrupulous to omit in his course those parts of his subject which might afford to idle minds occasion of loose reflections? It is not the nature of things that constitutes indecency; neither the words, nor even the ideas. 'Tis the intention, of those who speak, or the depravity, of them who hear. Madame *de la Fayette* is the person in the world, whom I should have least suspected for such a criticism. I shall wait upon the Countess to-morrow, and convince her of *La Fayette's* error.

Adieu.

LETTER XLVII.

HOW can you imagine, Marquis, that I should be surprized at the new lures the *financiere* has thrown out before you? Do you think I am a stranger to women? I never doubted for a moment, that she would use every artifice of coquetry, to snatch you from the Countess. She may, perhaps, have conceived some little inclination toward you herself, but moderate your vanity upon that occasion, for be assured, that her most active motive is, the transport of revenge. Her pride is interested to mortify her rival for having already obtained the preference. Women never forgive such an affront as this. And if he who is the subject of the quarrel, be not the principal object.

ject of their pique, they always make use of him for the purposes of their resentment.

You have met with in the *financiere*, all you required in the Countess, to confirm your attachment to her. She tenders you spontaneously, the reward of those services you proffer, and which by way of further compromise, she may perhaps, remit you. And I much fear you are indelicate enough to accept of such mean terms. For, to your shame be it spoken, the motto of all men's hearts is, *To the most complying*.

But should you not blush to deserve the least reproach from the Countess? What sort of person do you seem to prefer before her? A woman without delicacy or love; moved by no attractions but those of pleasure; more vain than sensible; more voluptuous than tender; and more amorous than fond: who values nothing in you, but your youth—and the qualities which attend it.

You are quite sensible of the whole worth of her rival; you acknowledge the wrongs you do her; you confess yourself to be a monster of ingratitude, and yet you cannot exert resolution enough to merit her forgiveness! In truth, Marquis, I am at a loss to account for you; and begin to agree with Madame *de Seigné*, who says that her son knows his duty, and can reason upon it well; but his passions hurry him away, so that *it is not his head that is mad, but his heart* *.

It would be idle here, to repeat to me what I formerly advanced, about the cavalier manner
in

* In her letters to Madame *de Grignan*, her daughter.

in which the affair of love was to be treated. At that time I rather amused myself with some light reflections, than pretended to give you advice in form. Besides, the question then regarded only a slight, a temporary attachment, a common mistress; but your present situation is of quite a different nature. I am certain that there is not, in the whole circuit of *Paris*, any woman who can be brought even within the degrees of comparison with that amiable person you are now quitting so foolishly. And for what reason, I pray you? Because, forsooth, her resistance mortifies your vanity. Kind, or unkind, we equally lose ye! What bonds remain there, to withhold such fugitives?

However, I agree with you, that when a passion is in *embers* it is no easy matter to revive the flame. *One has it no more in their power to continue love, than they had at first to resist it.* I confess the truth of such maxims, but confess them with regret, when I consider that in consequence of them, you are quitting the *jewel*, for the *paste*; that you renounce a solid happiness and lasting pleasures, for transient joys and capricious appetites.

But I foresee that all my reasonings will not reclaim you. I begin even to apprehend that you are grown weary of my moral; and to speak the truth, I think it almost ridiculous to preach up constancy to you, after it has appeared your love has ceased, and that—*your heart is mad.* I resign you therefore, to your evil genius; though I may perhaps, still have good-nature or curiosity enough, to accompany you in your future wanderings. What avails it to afflict one's self? Should I assume the air of a pedagogue?—Not I truly—We should nei-
ther

ther of us gain any thing by the bargain. I should only tire myself, without reforming you.

So fare you well.

LETTER XLVIII.

I MUST confess, Marquis, that your late behaviour toward the Countess, had put me a good deal out of humour with you; and I was very near breaking off all commerce between us, upon considering what a good-for-nothing sort of a fellow you are. But the easiness with which I have relented at your instances, makes me imagine, that my friendship for you has some mixture of weakness in it.

What you say is true enough, that *to continue one's attachment to a person only while they listen to our counsels, is but being half a friend.* The more dangerous your situation is, the less certainly I should abandon you. But one is not always master of their first movements. Whatever efforts I made to philosophize away your guilt, were borne down by the superior interests I had taken in the misfortunes of my fair ally. And who could avoid thinking you highly criminal, when you had given so charming a woman cause of complaint against you? But at present, since I find her situation beginning to grow easier, every day, I am almost sorry for the coolness of my last letter.

I shall henceforth content myself in compassionating her, without ever urging you any farther, upon this subject; so let us carry on our former intercourse, with the same careless freedom as before. You need apprehend no
more

more lectures from me; for I perceive they would, after this, be both useless and out of season.

I wish you health. Adieu.

LETTER XLIX.

YOU never imagined, Marquis, that it might be sometimes more difficult to disengage one's self from a mistress, than to gain one. However, you have experience of it in your own case, at present. Your disgust at the *financiere*, surprizes me only in this, that it did not happen sooner. Can it be possible that acquainted as you are with her character, you can be so far imposed upon by her as to mistake the despair she affects at your indifference, for the symptom of a real passion? That you should still remain the dupe of her intrigue, not only raises my wonder, but compassion too. Yet, is it not your own vanity that helps to carry on the illusion? And in truth, it is one of a very peculiar nature which can be able to flatter you with the love of such a woman. But men are really, so self-sufficient, that they would be puffed up with the fondness of the most abandoned courtesan.

But, prithee undeceive yourself. A woman that you quit, who is of the character of your amorous fair, has, be assured, no manner of concern in her misfortune, except for her own single interest. She would endeavour, by her emotions and her tears, to persuade you that your merit and accomplishments are the sole causes of her regret: that the failure of your affections is the only loss she has to lament: and
that*

that she knows no person upon earth who can be capable of repairing her damage.

But, all these pretexts are truly disingenuous. It is not an afflicted mistress who implores you. 'Tis a vain woman mortified at having her own inconstancy anticipated; piqued at the weak prevalence of her charms, distracted how to supply your loss, on the sudden; proud to assume an air of sensibility, and to appear deserving of a better fate. In a word, she only seems to justify that maxim of Monsieur de la Rochefaucault, *that women lament not their lovers for forsaking them, so much as to be thought more worthy of being beloved.*

It is quite ridiculous for the *financiere* to make an harangue on *sentiment*; and indeed she must have a very slight opinion of you to think of imposing it on you. But let us *join issue* on this point. The *Chevalier* is at present disengaged. Get him to replace you with her; and I dare answer for it, that in a letter or two, at the farthest, you will let me have the satisfaction to hear that her despair has been perfectly consoled.

A woman at her time of life, begins to apprehend lest she might not be able to make herself amends for the loss of a lover, and may be obliged to undervalue her charms by being reduced to accept the first offer. Her concern may perhaps be real, but you may more probably mistake the sources of it. Break then her bonds asunder, without remorse. In a punctilio of constancy or delicacy for such an object, you must certainly appear as ridiculous as you were truly criminal in your deficiency in both these respects, upon a late occasion.

Do

Do you remember, Marquis, what Monsieur de Coulanges said to us one day, upon a general topic; that *constancy was a virtue in persons of ordinary merit only*. Have they had the fortune to win the favour of some capricious fair, the consciousness of their own slight worth fixes their attachments, and intimidates from adventure, in despair of succeeding on such another crisis. Sufficiently happy in having taken a heart by surprise, they fear to lose a substance by grasping at a shadow. And as the smallest interval of consideration, might afford the mistress leisure to reflect upon the slight value of the lover, what is their policy? They make a *virtue of necessity*; they found a superstition upon love; and employ reason to preserve a heart, which they owe meerly to caprice, to accident, or surprise.

Prithee do not rank yourself in so insignificant a class. Hearts are the coin of galantry: amiable persons the commodities of this commerce: circulation is the life of trade, and equally benefits the community. A constant person then, is as blameable as a miser, who arrests the medium of traffic, and hoards up a treasure useless in itself, unless set free for the emolument of others.

Besides, what satisfaction is there in a mistress, to whom one is held attached, by reason only? How languid the pleasure! What violence sustained, in feigning love where passion has subsided! It rarely happens that fondness becomes extinct on both sides, at the same time; and then, what a misfortune is constancy! It may be compared to the cruelty of that antient tyrant who chained the living and the dead together. What difference is there between the inflictions?

Root out a prejudice then, so injurious to society. Follow my advice——tender your addresses to the President's widow you mentioned to me lately; she may perhaps lye a little heavy on hands, now and then; but at least, she will not degrade your passion. If, as you say, she be as deficient in sense as she abounds in beauty, her empire will not continue long; you will be then, the sooner restored to liberty again; and I doubt not but another, or many other, gallantries may succeed. Nay, perhaps, you may not wait the slowness of succession; for I perceive from the libertinism of your letter, that you are become a *man of mode*. The new system you have adopted is perfectly in that character; and is of admirable œconomy. Never to finish one amour, 'till you have commenced another; and not to withdraw yourself from a first engagement, but in proportion to your progress in a second——Can any thing be better contrived? But, as all these sage precautions may leave one unluckily unprovided; as some event beyond the reach of human foresight, may possibly disconcert your politics, or rather, *confound your devices*——to establish it as a principle, to part always on friendly terms with your former mistresses, in order to reserve somewhat to amuse your *vacations*——this, I must confess, Marquis, shews you to be a perfect *Martinet* in gallantry. In short, it must be impossible to make any improvement upon the wisdom of such a plan.

Adieu.

I do not know how I have the courage to write you such long and silly letters. I find so much pleasure in corresponding with you that it would
alarm

alarm me, if I did not know my heart well. But I recollect, that it is at present disengaged; and I must therefore keep on my guard, for some time, as I find you have fallen into a humour lately of saying tender things to me, and I don't know how soon I may take it into my head to believe you.

Once more, Adieu.

LETTER L.

YOU may make a jest of it if you please, but I do affirm it for a truth, that you are not in reality smitten with the fair *Presidente*. Believe me, Marquis, that I see farther into your heart than you do yourself. I have known a number of well-meaning people, with all the sincerity in the world, imagine, like you, that they were mightily in love, while in fact, they were not in the least actuated by any one symptom of that passion.

It is of the disorders of the heart, as it is of those of the body; some are real, and others imaginary. Every thing that attaches you to a woman, is not always love. The habit of being together, the facility of seeing each other, the flying from one's self, the amusements of galantry, the desire of pleasing, the hope of success; in a word, a thousand other motives, which resemble an elephant as much as a passion, are what men, more frequently than is imagined, mistake for love: and women also assist to confirm you in this error. Flattered at the homage they receive, while it feeds their vanity, they rarely examine into the philosophy of the matter. And are they not in the right of it? What a deal of pleasure would they lose!

To,

To the motives I have been mentioning, you may add another, which is as likely as any to deceive you with regard to the nature of your affections. The *Presidente* is certainly as pretty a woman as any in *Paris*; just entered into her *weeds*; and has lately refused the addresses of a man of high merit and accomplishments. Nothing could surely flatter your vanity more than such a conquest; which might procure you at once that *empty* fame, you men are generally so puffed up with. This, friend Marquis, is what you call love; and it may be a difficult matter to undeceive you; for when sanguine minds have once conceived an *imaginary* disorder, the most foreign symptoms are apt to be referred to the *real one*.

It may be entertaining enough, in a short time, to hear with what dignity you will speak of your supposed sentiments; how seriously you will think they have a right to challenge a grateful return. And what may be pleasanter still, would be the deferences that she herself might imagine to be their due. But the event may clear up your understanding, and you will then be the first to laugh at that air of importance you had given to so insignificant an affair.

Shall I tell you the whole of my opinion about you? I am persuaded that you will never be in love again. You will be sensible for the future, of but wandering likings, slight attachments, or capricious engagements. His arrows will but slightly glance o'er your *coat of mail*. You will no more, indeed, sustain its pains; but can you e'er again experience its pleasures? Can you ever expect to find, in such *extempore* passions as you have thrown yourself away upon, any of those delicate and delicious moments,
which

which formerly framed your highest blifs! I do not mean to flatter you, but I think I owe you the justice to say, that your heart is formed for refined pleasures. It is not you therefore, upon whom I charge the unhappy dissipation of your present life; it is upon the silly young men you associate with; with whom the *use* of pleasure is its *abuse*; and example leads you. But this giddiness of the senses will sooner or later cure itself; and you will be then sensible—at least, I wish it sincerely—that you have been mistaken in two instances, with regard to the situation of your heart. You think that it is enamoured of the *Presidente*; you will then perceive your error. You think that it has ceased all sentiment for the Countess; but remember what I have told you. A time may come, when we shall talk upon this subject with more pleasure and leisure. Let us proceed now to the rest of your letter.

I believe you will hardly deny, Marquis, but you were at a loss how to employ your time this morning, when you amused yourself in reading over all my letters; and I fancy that you were not a little out of humour also, by your *playing the critic* upon them as you have done. Some brilliant party, some flattering assignation, must certainly have failed you just then. But I do not mean to elude the difficulty you propose. I appear, you say, to contradict myself often: Should I acknowledge this to be true, might I not, at the same time, make the apology that *la Bruyere* did to some cavils of the same kind? *It is not I that contradict myself, but the heart upon which I reason.*

But do you conclude from hence, that all I have said on this subject, is false? I can hardly think

think you so ignorant. However, it is not unlikely that being perplexed by the various situations I have found you in, I might have appeared sometimes to destroy those maxims I had before advanced, upon different occasions. May it not be probable, that upon seeing you in danger of falling into error, I might have pressed too far those truths, which weakly urged might be thought too insufficient to have reclaimed you? How do I know, in fine, but that being interested in the happiness of a friend, my warmth to serve her may have somewhat warped my sincerity?

But one would fancy that I was as idle as you, to answer seriously to the cavils of your letter. Might I not have perceived at first sight, that there was more pique than criticism in them? But this is the last time you shall ever abuse my good nature. Adieu. I am going to console myself for your ingratitude, with the conversation of Monsieur de ———. A very different person from you, I assure you.

What pity 'tis, that you are not a woman! I should have so much pleasure in disputing with you about our new-fashioned head-dresses. I never saw any thing so enormous as the height of them. However, Marquis, I really think that if the *Presidente* does not put on one, incontinently, you cannot in decency, continue your *devoirs* any longer to her.

L E T T E R L I.

'TIS then a settled affair, it seems. Say what I will, you remain still enamoured of the *Presidente*. She has sacrificed a beloved rival to you, and you are in triumph. How ready

ready is your vanity to take advantage of every thing! But I should laugh heartily, if your boasted victory should end in her giving you an *audience of leave*, in a day or two: For it is not at all impossible, but that the sacrifice you so much glory in, may be meerly a *sineffe d'amour*. During the free commerce you have had among women, have you never picked up so much experience as to suspect every sentiment they affect? But if your yielding fair one should have only played you off to awake the drowsy passion of her former Celadon; if you shall find yourself after all, but made a tool of, and used as the *whip* of artifice, or *spur* of jealousy, I beg you may not lose your senses in wonder and amazement.

The *Presidente*, you'll tell me, has not the least manner of cunning, and is therefore incapable of such a stratagem. My dear Marquis, love is an admirable tutor; and the dullest persons imaginable in other matters, frequently discover a more subtle, just and certain discernment, than the wisest heads, where the interest of their hearts happen to come into question. But, let us quit your particular instance, and speak in general, of men in the like circumstances.

They imagine, just as you do, that the sacrifice which is made them of a rival, supposes their superiority over him. But how often does it happen that the formality of this renounce, is a meer farce? If she really discards him, either she loved him, or she did not. If she had loved him, 'tis plain by her quitting, that she loved him no longer: And in that case, what glory have you to boast upon such a preference? If she never loved him, what have
you . . .

you to be proud of, in triumphing over a man, toward whom she had always been indifferent?

There is another case also, where you may be preferred without having any more reason to flatter yourself on the conquest; and that is, when the vanity of your mistress is greater than her passion for the disgraced lover. Your rank, figure, character, and fortune, may determine such a one in your favour. It is very rare, I speak it to the confusion of women, nor are men a bit more rational in this respect, that a lover who has nothing but passion and high sentiments to urge, can long stand his ground against one who is distinguished by his quality, his station, his dependents, his liveries, equipage, &c. * * * * *

* * *. Besides, the deceased president was a Judge, and without doubt as formal and old-fashioned as his band or peruke. What an impression to be worn away, by a courtier and a warrior such as you!

Well, Marquis, will you believe my prophecies again? What did I tell you lately? Has the *Chevalier* found it such a difficulty to persuade your *Penelope*? This desponding mistress, just expiring on the loss of one lover, in less than

* The passage which follows here, in the French, appears unintelligible to me. The construction of the words is easy enough, but the meaning or scope of them is difficult. I have therefore, left them out in the translation; chusing rather to give *no sense*, than *nonsense*. But shall insert them here, in the original, to exercise the ingenuity of my readers. Dès que l'Amant le plus tendre peut faire rougir une femme; dès qu'elle n'ose avouer son Vainqueur; dès qu'elle n'ose même se faire un mérite de le sacrifier, je le prédis, son règne ne sera pas long. Elle ne sera embarrassée que de choisir dans toutes les bonnes raisons qu'elle aura de le quitter.

than a fortnight, has accepted another, pretends a passion for him, surrenders, and is forsaken. Has she lost any time, think you? Your sentiments I pray upon this subject?

Adieu.

LE T T E R LII.

YES, Marquis, it is to my friendship, it is to my counsels, that the Countess owes the tranquility she now begins to enjoy. But I cannot conceive for what reason you should complain of the indifference she marks toward you. And do you expect pity from me! I shall have great compassion for the wounds of vanity truly! Men are the oddest creatures! They would have women still regard them as objects of consequence, tho' in quitting them they generally neglect nothing to manifest their indifference toward them.

What signifies to you, the love or hate of one you have now no longer any passion for? Your jealousy of the little Duke, is so unaccountably ridiculous, that it made me laugh outright, when I came to that part of your letter. Is it not natural and rational too, that a woman should console herself for your loss, by listening to the addresses of a person who knows so much better how to prize her beauty and merit? Now prithee inform me, my good client, by what rule in equity you are become *plaintiff* in this suit? Examine your conscience, and subscribe to Madame de Sevigne's expression, that *your heart is mad*, my poor Marquis!

However, the proposition you make me is whimsical enough. It would be some sport certainly, to assist in your scheme of revenge,

N

against •

against your faithless mistress. If it was only out of spleen, on one hand, and for the oddity of the thing, on the other, we should commence a sort of a mock-amour, forthwith. But such a frolick may take an unlucky turn perhaps; for love, even the most innocent, may be compared to a kitten, that is apt to scratch you while you are only playing with it.

Therefore, friend Marquis, you may keep your heart to yourself, for me; I should make a scruple to deprive commerce of so choice a commodity. Besides, I am really so weary of the insipidity of men, that for the future, I shall trouble myself with none of them, except my friends. One always feels some regret at parting with a lover. I begin to taste the sweets of repose, and would continue to enjoy them.

It is whimsical enough, that you should first imagine you needed consolation yourself, and then take it into your head that I required the same relief, because the Marquis *de* — is gone upon his embassy. Indeed you are deceived. My friends suffice me, as I told you before; and if you would remain among that number, I advise you to send me no more *billet-doux* — otherwise —

Adieu, Marquis.

LETTER LIII.

I DECLARE, Marquis, that I shall at once, break off all manner of commerce with you, for the future, if you continue to accost me in the way you have lately done. What evil spirit has put it into your head, to attempt rivaling the absent? Was any creature ever so teased and rallied as I was yesterday evening? However,

ever, you entered into your part with such address, that whatever mind I had to be angry with you, I could not find in my heart to be so. What kind of event this may take, I cannot say, but this one thing is certain, that you spend your time very idly; for be assured, that I have not the least symptom of passion for you, at present; and what is more, I can answer for it, that I never shall. Yes, Sir—never. But 'tis merry enough to persuade one that they are afflicted, that they want consolation; in short, to take upon you to judge of others feelings, better than they can themselves! this is like the impertinence of the shoemaker, who pretends to tell his customers where the shoe pinched them.

But to speak of this matter a little more seriously. Prithce reflect for a moment, upon the folly of your attempt. Would it be generous, would it be decent in me, think you, to supplant my friend? For a woman who has assumed the character of a *Mentor* with you, who has acted the part of a parent to you, to dwindle after all, into that of a mistress? Rambling libertine as you are! if youth and beauty could not hold you, what bands should such an old maid as I pretend to tie you with? Perhaps, your sole view in my conquest, may be merely to know, whether love is the same with me in practice, as it is in speculation. But I will save you the expence of so much time and trouble, and shall satisfy your curiosity, *gratis*.

You must know then that women, one and all of us, rarely act conformably to their sentiments. This is what you would have the fullest instance of in a commerce of galantry

with me. All that I have said to you, upon love and women, would not instruct you after what manner I should conduct myself on such an occasion. There is 'vast difference between thinking and feeling; between acting for ourselves and reasoning for others. You would then discover in me, a number of singularities, that would soon make you weary of your engagements. I have quite a different cast of mind from most women. You may know them all, without knowing *Ninon*. And believe me, that all you might discover of new or extraordinary in me, would not repay you half the expence of investigation. You set my price too high, I tell you beforehand: you expend too much in expectation; more than I am responsible for. I should never *quit cost*, believe me. Dispose of yourself in a more brilliant list. The court affords you groupes of young and fair, with whom you will run no hazard of tiring yourself with exertions of wit and philosophy.

I confess, however, that I should have been pleased you had called in to see me to-day; for I was most of the afternoon, plagued with a dispute about the antients and moderns. It is puzzling my head so much still, that I am very near accepting your compliment seriously, but that I am not yet far enough on the decline, to occupy myself intirely with the study of science, or to bury myself alive with musty antients. If you would behave a little rationally, and drop the humour of making speeches, I really think I should prefer your company to any other, to interrupt and enliven, now and then, such serious occupations. But you are so ungovernable, and such a profligate, that I dare hardly invite you to sup with me to-morrow.

I mis-

THE MARQUIS DE SEVIGNE. 269

I mistake in saying *to-morrow*; for it is now near two o'clock in the morning, and I consider that my letter cannot reach you 'till noon: So take notice, that it is this very evening I expect you.

Will you complain of me now? Is not this an assignation in form? But let this careless freedom convince you, that I am not much afraid of you, and that I shall attend to your amorous vows, no farther than will just amuse me. You ought to know that I am not a person to be easily imposed upon that way. I have ye all by heart.

Adieu.

L E T T E R L I V.

I OUGHT no longer to conceal from you the last resolve of the Countess, with regard to you. While I could preserve her secret, without betraying the friendship I had conceived for you, I have been faithful to her. But should I reserve what I am now going to communicate to you, you would probably have cause, one day, to reproach me severely. Notwithstanding the many infidelities you have been guilty of, whatever pains she has taken to persuade you that you were intirely forgotten, you have never ceased to be most tenderly remembered by her. Tho' she has endeavoured to punish you, by an affected indifference, she could never refrain from the pleasure of seeing you: And it was in compliment to her, that I have sometimes feigned quarrels with you, in order to bring you the oftner on your penitentials before me. But all these shifts have not been sufficient to satisfy a heart so intimately affected;

and the Countess is upon the very crisis of executing a design, which I have a long time opposed. You may inform yourself of the particulars, from the letter she wrote to me yesterday; and which I send you inclosed.

A Letter from the Countess,
To Madame de L'ENCLOS.

“ If you would remain my friend, dear Ninnon, cease to combat my resolution. You know that it is not a sudden transport. It is neither the result of a momentary resentment, an hasty pique, nor of despair. I have concealed nothing from you. The possession of the Marquis’s heart, would have constituted my highest felicity, had I been able to have insured it for life. I should have been certain of losing it for ever, if I had been indiscreet enough to have accorded him those favours he solicited for. His inconstancy has shewn me that the opposite conduct is not always a certain method of preserving a lover. One must renounce this passion intirely, since men are found incapable of an attachment more tender, tho’ not less pure, than that of simple friendship.

“ You know too well, that I am not sufficiently cured not to feel perturbations every time I see the Marquis. Flight is the only remedy for this evil, and it is the one I am determined to betake myself to. I am not in the least apprehensive of what the world may say, upon my retreat into the country. I have prevented those who might perhaps be surprized on this occasion. It is known that I have lately gained a considerable process,
“ against

“ against my husband’s executors. I have
 “ made a plausible pretext of going to take
 “ possession of the estate of —, which they
 “ contested with me. I have thus obviated
 “ the malignant satisfaction of the public, in
 “ putting their own construction upon my elec-
 “ tion of solitude; and at the same time, re-
 “ moved all suspicion from the Marquis, of
 “ of his having the least part in this determi-
 “ nation.

“ I send you herewith, his picture and let-
 “ ters. Good Gods, how weak is human na-
 “ ture! Must it require a conflict then, to
 “ quit a plague! But the strife is over—and
 “ my resolves shall never—never falter more.
 “ Sympathize with me, the mean while, my
 “ dear friend; and remember the promise you
 “ have given me in confidence, to declare the
 “ most perfect indifference, on my part. Who-
 “ ever breaks off in resentment, publishes
 “ their pique and regret at the rupture. ’Tis
 “ but a modest way of begging a reconcili-
 “ ation. And as I have now, not the least
 “ desire of renewing my engagements with the
 “ Marquis, I would have you return him the
 “ articles I send you, obliging him, as we
 “ agreed upon before, to make me the same
 “ restitution. You may say that the exigence
 “ of my affairs has required me to leave *Pa-*
 “ *ris*, for some time; but I entreat that you
 “ will not be the first to mention me to him.

“ I should be inconsolable, my dear Ninon,
 “ at parting from you, did I not hope to see
 “ you frequently in my retirement. You write
 “ freely to your friends; and if you judge of
 “ them by the tenderness and esteem they bear
 “ you, there is not a single one among them,
 “ more

" more worthy of that title, than me. I
 " reckon upon your correspondence 'till I
 " shall have the higher pleasure of your con-
 " verse. You are not now to learn my senti-
 " ments about you.

Farewel."

I have no advice to give you, Marquis, upon
 this occasion; and all the favour I shall desire of
 you is, never to expose the disingenuousness of
 my conduct, in this affair, which the Countess
 would have just reason to resent. All that I
 have to excuse me to myself, is, that you have
 loved her too fondly, to look upon this resolve
 with indifference; and if I am not much mista-
 ken, I might perhaps have injured the inte-
 rests of both, by concealing it from you.

Adieu.

LETTER LV.

I AM charmed at what you have done, Mar-
 quis, and you are a most worthy creature,
 after all. Fear not—Your behaviour, my
 instances, and better than either, her own un-
 extinguished flame, will conspire to conquer
 the resistance of the Countess. Every thing
 ought to determine her to accept the offer you
 make her, of your hand; and I can venture to
 promise you, even at present, that her pride
 alone resists equally our intreaties, and her own
 inclinations.

I pressed her warmly this morning, to de-
 clare in your favour, and her last defence was,
 the fear of new revolts, on your part. "Chear
 " up,

“ up, says I; one very promising circumstance,
 “ on his side, is, that he is now undeceived
 “ with regard to other women, upon compa-
 “ ring them with the one he had quitted.
 “ Men of sense or principle, have but a certain
 “ number of trespases to permit themselves.
 “ The Marquis has already passed through
 “ those which his youth and condition of life
 “ seemed almost to justify. He indulged him-
 “ self in them, at a time when they might be
 “ at least, excuseable. He has sped all the fro-
 “ lics of his age and class; and having thus paid
 “ his tribute to the *fashion of the times*, he is be-
 “ come now, *free of life*; and may be at li-
 “ berty to act agreeably to reason and virtue,
 “ for the remainder of it. The only objection,
 “ of *modern days*, that is likely to stand against
 “ him, may be his appearing too fond a hus-
 “ band: But this is a foible which will readily
 “ be pardoned in him, by those who either see,
 “ or know you.

“ You risk nothing then, my dear Coun-
 “ tess; you have yourself passed through the
 “ character of a *fine lady*, but had too much
 “ sense to continue in it long. You quitted
 “ it upon trial, and the Marquis imitates your
 “ example. Remit therefore his past excesses,
 “ and suffer not your obstinacy to kill him with
 “ despair. The world would exclaim against
 “ you.”

In short, I prayed and pressed, without ceas-
 ing, and left her in a sort of irresolution, which I
 dare say will soon be determined in your favour,
 as her resistance has probably begun already to
 render her extremely uneasy.

Well, Marquis, if the agitation that arises
 from all this, will give you leisure to reflect up-

on what I formerly told you, will you not be apt to think me still in contradiction with myself: I had at first, advised you to treat the passion of love *en cavalier*, and to trouble yourself with no more of it than might just serve to amuse you; and that either as lover or gallant, you should suffer yourself to be bound by a *slip-knot* only. But I then spoke to you upon a general topic, and relative to the generality of women meerly. Could I at that time prophesy that you would be so happy to meet and engage with such a charmer as the Countess, who to the beauties of her own sex has joined all the merits of yours? What a lucky mortal you are! Now going to possess, in the same person, at once the most amiable mistress, and the most estimable friend! Deign to admit me a third in this choice union, and I shall not deem myself less fortunate than either. For if there be in nature, an higher bliss than rejoicing in the happiness of our friends, we must attend 'till angels shall pronounce it.

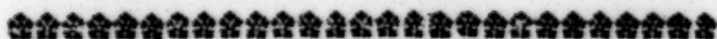
Farewel

END of the LETTERS.

THE



T H E
C O N C L U S I O N .



The T R A N S L A T O R
To the R E A D E R .

I HAVE here finished this collection of letters, which I hope will entertain the reader as much as they have done the translator ; for in truth, there is an uncommon deal of wit, humour, spirit, and philosophic sense running thro' the whole.

However, it may be plainly perceived in these writings, that *Ninon's* principles of philosophy, had been tainted by her conversation with the greatest male wits of France, *La Bruyere*, *Rochefaucault*, *St. Evremond*, *Fontaine*, &c. For the cynical manner in which she treats the subject of love, is but part of that disingenuous philosophy, which the French writers in general apply to every human affection or moral ; resolving friendship, gratitude, filial and paternal ties, in short, every species and degree of virtue, into a *selfish motive*.

'Tis true, that *Madame de l'Enclos* has laid open the avenues, and inmost recesses of the female

female heart, betrayed its weakness, and pointed out those peculiar foibles, where the arts of men may attack it with most probability of success. But then, it may at the same time be observed, that she describes her sex, in those instances, as in a *state of nature*, unimproved by education, unrestrained by religion, and unassisted by grace: And truly, under such a state of *original sin*, she has been perhaps at too great an expence of address, to circumvent so defenceless an enemy.

Most of the French writers determine the morals of mankind, from the sentiments of their own breasts. But reasoning from particulars to generals, has never been admitted for sound philosophy. Tho' a thief at the gallows confesses his constant disposition to steal, we are not surely from thence to argue, that another man may not view a purse of gold with as little inclination to purloin it, as to rob a tulip of its colour.

To this class of writers, I could wish that the world would join in refusing their arrogated title of *Moralists*; and more justly stile them *Satirists*. Tho' I think that even this would be treating them with too much respect; for as they speak of human nature, rather with the contempt of a *Lampooner*, I shall always choose to deem them *Libellers* of mankind.

Such men may be said, as my friend remarks, in his notes upon translation, * to hold out the wrong side of tapestry to view, by which all the beauties of colouring and proportion are con-

* *Essay on classic translation*, in this work. See latter part of the translator to the reader.

concealed, and only the grosser lines and coarser figures exposed.

The pleasure, consequent to acts of benevolence and charity, has been often mistaken for the end; from whence, selfishness has, by superficial reasoners, been imputed to virtue. But a very little abstraction may help one to discover, that pleasure is the *companion* only, and neither the *end*, or *motive*. To support life and health, is the intent or purpose of eating and drinking. To these the relishes of taste are added, from the meer bounty of Providence; to *gratify*, as well as *satisfy* the natural appetites. And the pleasure arising in the mind, upon having done, or even designed any worthy action, may be something analogous to this.

I shall make use of the above allusion, farther, to carry me through the argument I would maintain; for I do not deny, that there is a *moral epicurism*, as well as a *natural one*: and that by frequent contemplation upon the *concomitant* pleasure, it may become at length, the sole *end*, in particular agents. So that virtue may thus be reduced to sensuality, and have its pure essence quite destroyed, in the minds of such persons. But surely, this does not alter its original nature, any more than different colours become one, because the jaundiced eye perceives them alike, through a tainted medium.

It is a received opinion, that the bulk of mankind do not know the real motives from which they act. It is possible indeed that I, for instance, may be guided by principles which I may be ignorant of. But then, in the name of common sense, how come these presumptuous reasoners to be better acquainted with

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with them than I am myself? When such subtle philosophers pretend to tell me, that I am actuated by motives which I am not conscious of in my own breast, they seem to talk as impertinently as the *shoe-maker*, mentioned by *Ninon*, just now *

Besides, I will admit this ignorance, in *natural* actions only, in such as are merely *mechanical*. But with regard to *moral* ones, the nature of them is determined by the *consciousness* of the agent. And if his resolves arise simply in his own mind from principles of humanity, benevolence, or any other generous emotion, the virtue of them is pure and disinterested, notwithstanding the *attendant* pleasure; which arising only from subsequent reflection, can no more taint the excellence of the first impulse, than poison thrown into a stream can infect its source.

Readers, farewell.

The Translator.

* Letter LIII. last lines of the first paragraph.

F I N I S.



